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THE VENGEANCE

OF

MAURICE DENALGUEZ

BY

SELINA DOLARO

AUTHOR OF "BELLA-DEMONIA," "MES AMOURS," ETC.

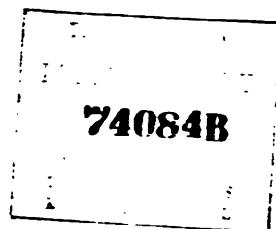


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MRS



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In Memoriam.

SELINA DOLARO.

Yon rising Moon that looks upon us twain,
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane,
How oft, hereafter rising, look for us
Through this same Garden, and for *One* in vain !

And when, like her, O Sáki, you shall pass
Among the Guests, star-scattered on the grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made *one*,—turn down an empty glass !

—OMAR-I-KHAYYÁM.

SHE said to me one day, not long ago, “ I wonder whether I shall live to see my book come out, and hear what critics say ? I fear I shall not.” And her doubt proved just. Madame Dolaro, of whose *self* the world knew but one aspect, that which strove to please its fickle fancy on the mimic stage, has left a world of friends to mourn a loss that few, who knew her not, as some of us, can realize.

Born but a few months more than thirty-five years since, she lived her life with all its disappointments and its joys —neither of which were few—calmly serene in every purpose of her earthly span. When, on the morning of the 25th, we buried what was left to us of her, quietly, as she wished, among the graves of those who died in her ancestral faith, in a green nook among the Cypress Hills, the honored few who, with her to the end, heard her last words and caught her dying breath when on the world she closed her weary eyes, felt that her time had come, and thanked

the God in whom through all her pilgrimage on earth she placed her trust with gentle, simple faith, that He had suffered her to end the work she had begun, and, merciful at last, had let her fall asleep in "perfect peace that passeth understanding." For in death, as she had been in life, she lay a sweet ensample to her children and her friends.

She married early—in her fifteenth year—one who, like her, was of the Jewish faith ; he traced his ancestry, without a flaw, back to a family who from their home in Spain were thrust in 1492 and sought a safe retreat in Italy. Finding a refuge at Belasco, thence they took their name, discarding that which Spain had known them by,—Miara.

Her artist life began in '70, after some three years spent developing her matchless voice at the Conservatoire of Paris, and she made her first *début* upon the stage that year in "Chilperic" at the Lyceum Theatre. Success crowned every task she tempted from the start ; the artist world flocked eager to acclaim this *prima donna* who was but a child, and all the press of England sang the hymn of her rare triumphs in light opera. Later, in "Zampa" and in "Fleur de Lys," in "Madame Angot" and "La Péri-chole," she showed the public that in opéra-bouffe there may be something more than vulgar jest, suggestive quip, and veiled indecency, throwing around burlesque a zaimph of art. Under the circumstances, 'twas not strange that, presently discarding such light *rôles*, she trod at last the operatic stage under Carl Rosa's management, and then it was that, conscious of her power, she re-created "Carmen," and at once took, as it were of right, the place reserved for her.

Her "Carmen" first was played in '79,—in February,—and from that time forth it seemed as if her future were secured; but circumstances which proverbially are out of our control ordained that she should cede her place in opera to some one else less fit for it than she had been, and soon we find her once again, with all the cares of management upon her hands, leading her company in opéra-bouffe,—only, however, for a while; for next we find her singing "Car-

men" in New York,—this time in Italian, and now surrounded by an envious foreign *clique* who strove to hinder her in all she did, till, weary of their petty jealousies, she sought once more her English home for rest. In 1883 she came again, and shone among us here in comedy. She played in "Caste," and those who saw how she won every heart with Polly Eccles' tears have since sought vainly for her life again. Since then until her doul declared itself, she played a vast variety of *rôles*, comedy, burlesque, drama, opéra-bouffe, and charmed us with her tears as with her smiles,—for even in her most Cimmerian hours, Madame Dolaro smiled upon the world that was the better that she lived therein, but used her with such merciless despite, until at last when luck had seemed to turn and some of her desires began to bask in realization, then the strained cord snapped. Her health, which had left much to be desired, gave way without the warning of an hour, and she who yesterday had been the queen of opera and comedy was laid upon a bed of sickness from which those who saw her there ne'er dared to hope that she could rise again, and plucky though she was, she too made up her mind she was to die.

'Twas only in her later years that I was privileged to know her, when the blow had fallen that deprived her of the power to revel in the glorious gift of life; but even then her bravery was such that high above misfortunes such as most men would succumb to, she triumphantly rose, and began her work in life anew: her voice, her strength, much of her sweet self, gone, she turned her hands and brain to other work. Early in '87, when at first her fragile body rallied from the shock of her first seizure, she took up the pen and put the final touches to a play called "Fashion" which she wrote some years ago, but which had never been produced. Hearing the play was ready for the stage, her friends came round her and entreated her to let them act it for her benefit, and A. M. Palmer, foremost of them all, lent her his stage and its accessories wherewith to mount her brilliant comedy. In May—the 19th of the month—this work received its first production, and was played as per-

fectly as any drama could, by a well-chosen cast of faithful friends who strove their utmost to make "Dolly's play" a great success. How they succeeded has been written in the annals of the stage. Now she could rest awhile, and by the sea Madame Dolaro and her daughter lived a few short months in perfect peace, and so when she returned to town it almost seemed as if she might be with us soon again as once she had been, but the daily cares, the constant wonder where to turn for work that she could do, began to break again the skein of life that rest had almost weft.

When in the winter-time of '87 her drama "Fashion" was produced and all its beauties marred by rank incompetence of some of those who played it, and "the press" who in the spring had chanted in its praise turned round and said that "Dolly's play" had failed to please the public, then she realized that she must seek more uncongenial work to make her daily bread, and so she wrote articles, stories for the magazines, and made that book entitled "Mes Amours" out of the poems and the doggerel rhymes that she had written and that faithful friends wrote for her, giving her their leave to print their verses. Not content to wait and trust to Fortune for some unexpected gift, she turned at once to the most arduous task of all her life,—"Bella-Demonia." With loving care she labored at her book, reading authorities and histories, and, having gathered her materials, she took them to the sea-shore. There we wrote (hers was the brain and mine the hand alone) "Bella-Demonia : a Dramatic Tale." The world has read how when this book was done and publishers had read it and agreed to publish it the manuscript was lost,—was stolen from the office of *The World* by some malignant fiend whose wickedness the patient lightnings yet have failed to blast. Up to that hour her health had seemed to us improving daily, but this frightful loss seemed such a shock to the poor fragile soul that from that day the end began, and as she bravely sate her down and wrote again her book from memory (for she kept no notes), the hand of Death seemed to be drawing her away from us. The book

at length was done over again, and then the Lippincotts made her an offer that she could accept, so that the latter months were lived at least in comfort, if not luxury.

Meanwhile, she made another drama of her book, which still awaits production ; it is called "Bella-Demonia," like her novel, and in it she voices the dramatic scenes through which the people of her novel pass. This done, she did not "fold her hands for sleep," but set to work once more and wrote a new novel, which just two days before the end began was finished. She had been down town to see about its publication, when, chancing to call upon her with a friend, we found her lying crimsoned with her life that ebbed from the old deep-hidden wound. That was upon the 19th, Saturday, and from that time with all the care we knew how to bestow we tended her, though we, her children and her friends, knew well that this was the beginning of the coming end.

All Sunday and on Monday just a gleam of hope lit up the twilight of our grief, but Tuesday afternoon the tired soul began the final struggle to be free. On Wednesday her sharper sufferings ceased, and in the afternoon the look of pain died from her face and one of exquisite contentment took its place. She was so fair ! Then, at a quarter after six o'clock, she tried to speak to us just once again, and, gentle, trusting, loving to the last, she ceased to strive to hold her little life, and, weary of her day's work in the world which for her tender frame had been so hard, she laid her down to rest and trustingly gave back her soul to God—and fell asleep.

EDWARD HERON-ALLEN.

26th January, 1889.

Selina Dolaro.

A BIOGRAPHY.

"I see there is nothing left for me to do but to write my own obituary. Modesty will prevent my ornamenting it with much eulogy; but if I may be forgiven what in any other sketch would be conceit, I will endeavor to make up in truth for other deficiencies."

* * *

"I will paint two pictures,—let those who love me choose which they will. Both are from life, both are true.—A woman still young, with a love of life as strong as death, but whose understanding grasps the awful fact that the down grade is steep, and that she is being hurried forward; but that tender hands await the final step that shall bring her to the bottom.—The same woman, young, but with youth stamped out for all but those who love her well enough to read her soul 'between the lines.' Through all steals the peace love brings. If she has lost her place in the world's strife she has gained in compensation, affection, consideration, generosity, that few have known. She has been the light, lightening the great good for good's sake that the good have done."

* * *

"I thank God that I was never so one-ideal as to be reduced to mourn for a past that *was* past. I have loved my work, but it has never excluded all and every other thought. I am grateful that I can, and always could, forget the won-

derful and all-absorbing *I*—remembering how small a thing was that *I*!"

* * *

The above prolegomena were written by Selina Dolaro at different times during the past lustrum; and I feel that I cannot do better than copy them from her slips as the only comment necessary upon the biographical sketch which follows, all that is to be said of her as a woman having been indicated, though inadequately in the preceding "*In Memoriam*."

Selina Dolaro was born on the 20th August, 1849. She was the daughter of an accomplished musician, by name Benjamin Simmons, who, living in London to-day, follows the profession that he adopted as a youth. At a very early age his only child betrayed a violent passion for music, and she used herself to tell a story of her having been found one night, when she had escaped unobserved from home, drinking in the strains of *La Favorita* in the gallery at Her Majesty's Theatre in London. Her passion for music was so strong, that at the age of fourteen she was placed under the tuition of an Italian maestro named Salvini. At the age of sixteen (in 1865) she interrupted her studies by marrying one of her own faith, by name Isaac Dolaro Belasco. His ancestral name was Miara D'Olivares, and he came of an old family of Spanish Jews whose home was in Aragon. On the expulsion of the race from Spain in 1492, the family took refuge in the Italian town of Belasco, where they dropped the name Miara, and took that of the town of their adoption—D'Olivares meanwhile becoming Italianized into Dolaro. This was the name Madame Belasco adopted when she made her *début* in 1870, and this is the name which she made famous in two continents.

In 1866 she determined to turn her marvellous gifts to account, and going to Paris, was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire, where for three years she studied under Auber.

Her studies completed, she was not long in finding an opening, and she made her *début* on the 22d January, 1870,

as Galsuinda in Hervé's "Chilperic" at the Lyceum Theatre, the first Opera Bouffe, properly so-called, ever produced in London. I have before me an old and tattered collection of press notices that attest the *furore* created by the first appearance of this finished *artiste*, who was hardly more than a child—in years. She rose with rapidity to the leading part of Fredegonde in the same opera, and then created (in English) the title rôle in "*Geneviève de Brabant*." It was at this time that her second daughter was born, and the child was christened in the name of her mother's latest triumph. From this moment her future as a *prima donna* was secured, and in the mouths of all the *cognoscenti* there was but one name—hers. Meanwhile four children had been born to her; and then, realizing that she had drawn a blank in the lottery of love, she sought for and obtained a divorce from her husband, and thenceforward devoted her life to the cultivation of her art and the care of her children.

In the year 1872 she appeared (October 2nd) as Camilla at the Court Theatre in T. F. Flownman's Opera Bouffe "*Zampa*, or the Buckaneer and the little Dear." The opera was justly condemned as mediocre, but the success that Madame Dolaro wove out of the unsatisfactory materials at her command was admittedly phenomenal. It was in this opera that she first gave her celebrated rendering of Chauumont's song "*La Première Feuille*." On the 17th May, 1873, she appeared in the title rôle of "*Fleur de Lys*" at the Gaiety Theatre with W. J. Hill, Edward Righton, and Emily Soldene in the cast; and in the December of that year (the 23d) she made her first appearance as Clairette in "*La Fille de Madame Angot*," for her own benefit, at the Philharmonic Theatre. On the same occasion she played a scene from "*The First Night*" with H. F. Montague. Encouraged by her success, she made a tour of the provinces with her own company in the summer of 1874, playing Clairette to the Ange Pitou of John Chatterson, who has since achieved fame and fortune as Signor Perugini. The tour comprised Nottingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Bradford, Liverpool, and other great Midland and Northern cities;

and at its conclusion we find her playing the part of "Sibyl Cobb" in "The Black Prince" at the St. James' Theatre. "The Black Prince" was adapted from MM. Labiche and Delacour's "*Voyage en Chine*" by H. B. Farnie. Prior to this appearance she played a short season of "*La Fille de Madame Angot*" at the Lyceum Theatre in London prior to Emily Soldene's departure for the United States. I find among her papers the following sonnet, dating from this period of her triumphs:

SONNET TO MISS SELINA DOLARO

(ON HER IMPERSONATION OF CLAIRETTE.)

Le Comique, le vrai Comique, n'est jamais méchant.
—Montesquieu.

"The truly comic never is profane;"
So spoke the sage, in accents which have reached
Far down Time's steep and echoed o'er the main.
And, lady, thou dost practise what he preached;
For thou hast churlish bigotry impeached
With thy bright smile, and mirth-provoking art,
And laughter-stirring glances, and arch grace.
Pale Care's sword for art thou—he has no part
In the soft beams that radiate from thy face
And pierce the secret chambers of the heart,
Lulling to rest sharp pain with all her smart.
True art and genius this—which all embrace—
To cheer poor nature where it darkling lies,
And raise it joyward—nearer to the skies.

NOTTINGHAM, April 27, 1874.

C. C. HARRISON.

On the 30th January, 1875, Madame Dolaro commenced her career as the manageress of a London Theatre, and opened the Royalty Theatre (in Dean Street, Soho), of which Miss Henrietta Hodson was the then lessee, with Offenbach's "*La Perichole*," supported by Walter Fisher and poor Fred Sullivan, who died soon after the termination of this engagement. It is needless to tell of Madame Dolaro's triumph as "*La Perichole*," which, with the exception of "*Mademoiselle Lange*," was perhaps her greatest part, and is familiar to playgoers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Perhaps the most interesting circumstance connected with this production is a modest announcement that appears on the programme in the following terms:

"NOTICE.

"In preparation, a New Comic Opera, composed expressly for this theatre, by W. S. Gilbert and Mr. Arthur Sullivan."

This new comic opera was "Trial by Jury," the inaugural effort of the Gilbert-Sullivan partnership, which was produced by Madame Dolaro on the 25th March, 1875, with Miss Nelly Bromley as the defendant. London awakened at once to the new possibilities of legitimate Comic Opera, and to the critic nothing can be more interesting than the mass of notices there-anent which lie before me as I write.

At the termination of a most successful season she took her company on tour, playing "*La Perichole*," "*La Fille de Madame Angot*," and "Trial by Jury," in Manchester, Salford, Leeds, Nottingham, Sheffield, Liverpool, Newcastle, Birmingham, and Dublin; and on October the 12th she re-opened the Royalty Theatre with the same bill. It was during this tour that she first played "Mademoiselle Lange" instead of "Clairette" in "*La Fille de Madame Angot*," and from that moment the "Lange" of Emily Soldene and Cornélie d'Anka become forgotten history.

The next record that I find of Madame Dolaro's career is an announcement of her "first appearance in Comedy," on the afternoon of January 17, 1877, as Lady Teazle in "The School for Scandal." Of her success or failure in the part I can find no particulars, the next set of papers and cuttings referring to what was perhaps her greatest and most legitimate triumph, to wit, her performance of the title rôle in "Carmen," under Carl Rosa's management, at Her Majesty's Theatre, on the 5th of February, 1879. This was the first presentation of the opera in English, and such was the *furore* created by Madame Dolaro's impersonation, coming as it did after Trebelli's and Minnie Hauk's, that "Carmen" ran on almost into April. Dur-

ward Lely was the José, and Julia Gaylord and Snazelle were also in the cast. At the close of the season Col. Mapleson determined to send her over the following autumn to play "Carmen" in New York, this time in Italian, with the Campanini company; but in the mean time Madame Dolaro, who, partly from virtue and partly from necessity, was never happy unless she was in harness, opened the Folly Theatre with an Opera Bouffe called "The Dragoons," a version by Hersee of Maillart's "*Les Dragons de Villars*," on April the 14th. On the opening night of the season she was seriously ill, but all the notices before me unite in praise of her performance; and by April the 20th, being fully recovered, a fresh crop of criticisms announced the triumph of her efforts. This production was followed by a revival of "*La Perichole*," in which she was supported by Fred Leslie, Harry Nicholls, and Frank Wyatt, and this was in turn followed by a run of Savile Clarke's and Lewis Clifton's burlesque of "Drink," entitled "Another Drink," in which she played Gervaise, supported by Miss De Grey and G. W. Anson. It was in this burlesque that she originated her celebrated imitation of Sarah Bernhardt, for which she was singularly adapted by her features and Parisian training; and until the day of her death it remained a never-failing source of wonder and amusement to her friends. At this point in her mass of documents I find a laconic entry, in her own handwriting:

"*Here she departed for America.*"

She arrived in this country in October, engaged by Mapleson, to play "Carmen" to Campanini's "José," at the Academy of Music. She arrived to find herself an object of dislike, suspicion, and envy on the part of a company of Italian professionals, who, from Campanini down, did all in their power to thwart her every endeavor. A noted New York manager has often told me that he attended the dress rehearsal, and that the way the Italians heaped ridicule that verged upon insult on the poor little woman made the blood of the English and Americans present boil. It is little wonder, therefore, that on October 27th, at her first

appearance, singing under such circumstances, in a language that was strange to her, in a theatre twice the size of the largest English opera-house, she was pitifully nervous; and though many of the papers recognized her exquisite *technique* and dramatic intensity, her impersonation of "Carmen" was not a triumph. On Saturday, November 1st, she sang the rôle again at a matinée; and though the papers now united in paying tribute to her acting and vocalization, Madame Dolaro, accustomed to nothing that fell short of perfection, threw up the engagement and returned to England to resume the rôle in English under Carl Rosa.

Early in the following year (1880) she signed a contract with one M. B. Leavitt for a tour of the United States, to commence that autumn. In the July of that year she gave a performance of "Twelfth Night," at the Gaiety Theatre, supported by Conway, in which she played Viola to his Sebastian. This was always one of her favorite reminiscences, and I find among her archives the following couplets, written by a well-known songster, on the occasion:

TO VIOLA: A WELCOME.

Sweet Songstress, who first showed the charm
That Bizet's genius left below,
And Carmen's nature, wild and warm,
Pourtrayed,—a child of love and woe,—
Thrice welcome is thy brightsome face
To light the gloom of Drama's day.
Let dull Convention now give place,
And musty Precedent make way;
For Nature takes our hearts by storm,
And will not brook denial. Ah!
She breaks through futile rule and form
Incarnated in Viola !

E. R. S.

On September 13, 1880, her first American tour began; and all over the States she played "Olivette," "Little Carmen," "La Grande Duchesse," "La Fille du Tambour Major," "La Fille de Madame Angot," and "Orpheus." Mr. Leavitt seems to have had a talent for disagreeing with his entire company, and his combination broke up in Chi-

cago in March, 1881,—not, however, before Selina Dolaro had established herself the Queen of Opera Bouffe from the State of Maine to the Pacific coast. She at once determined to make this country her home, but before returning to England to settle her affairs, desiring to play in some real success, she played in April and May a run of “Olivette,” with the Strakosch-Hess Acme Opera Company.

In May she returned to England, closed her affairs there, and went over to Paris, where the composer Audran, deeply impressed with her power, wrote especially for her the comic opera “The Grand Mogul,” which, on October 29th, was produced at the Bijou Theatre by Col. McCaull, under the title of “The Snake Charmer.” At the close of this run, i.e., in May, 1882, she took the Bijou Theatre, and produced there “The First Night” and “A Lesson in Love,” supported by Harry St. Maur. The venture was unsuccessful, owing to the season, and in November we find her playing her own play “Justine,” at the New Park Theatre (now Harrigan’s), under the management of J. A. Stevens. This was her first effort at dramatic authorship, and it was at about this time that she wrote “Fashion” in its original form, founded on a play of Eugene Scribe.

She disposed of it first to Shook & Collier, for production at the Union Square Theatre, but they not having produced it within the stipulated time the property reverted to her; and on April 17th (1883) she appeared as Polly Eccles in H. M. Pitt’s “Caste” company, Eben Plympton, Fanny Addison, and William Davidge forming part of the cast. This was her greatest comedy success, and had it not been for the unfortunate season of the year, this revival of the Robertsonian Comedies would probably have become historic. As it was, the company disbanded in June. I have before me a letter written to Madame Dolaro by Sara Jewett *apropos* of this performance, which is a remarkable tribute paid by one great actress to the talent of another.

The years 1884 and 1885 were passed in varying fortunes, in gleams of hope and cruel disappointments, and Madame Dolaro kept but few and fragmentary records of them.

She made many appearances, as she was ever ready to do, on behalf of her unfortunate fellow-actors; and in September, 1885, she made her last important appearance before the public with Minnie Maddern in Steele Mackaye's version of Sardou's "*Andrea*," entitled "In Spite of All." It was at the close of this engagement that, reduced to a condition of financial embarrassment, she conceived the idea of giving for her own benefit an entirely original form of entertainment, which she entitled an "Impromptu." This took place on the 3d March, 1886, in the University Club Theatre, and consisted of a series of impromptu "acts," performed by people who left their seats in the audience for the purpose, among whom were Sophie Eyre, Caroline Hill, Lillian Russell; Kyrie Bellew, George Riddle, Louis James, Frank Wilson, and, of course, Mr. Marshall P. Wilder. She followed this with an original dialogue, entitled "Reading a Tragedy;" and the proceedings wound up in the small hours with a dance. The whole entertainment is described as having been singularly fascinating in its decorous *désinvolture*.

But, alas! here was the foreshadowing of the end. During the eveing Madame Dolaro tried to sing her famous "*La Première Feuille*," and was compelled to abandon the attempt; and ten days later a friend entering her rooms on Twenty-third Street found her bathed in her life-blood, and apparently dying. The doctors who consulted over her case gave it out as their verdict that she could not live three months. Dark days had fallen upon "Dolly," and she resigned herself patiently to await the end.

Her friends rallied themselves together, and on the evening of the 26th of April a great benefit was given her at Wallack's Theatre (now Palmer's), which relieved her for a time of material cares, and of the anxiety consequent on the expenses of her illness. For a year she rested physically, but worked mentally at her play "*Fashion*," which was finally produced by her friends for her benefit on the 19th May, 1887, at the Madison Square, A. M. Palmer giving her his theatre and all its accessories for the purpose.

She has said a hundred times to me: "I have believed in God, and prayed to him all my life; and as a reward, when I wanted them most, he sent me Palmer and Donahue. Remember that!"

The latter gentleman was her faithful friend and physician, who remained with her to the last—George H. Donahue, M.D., of Gramercy Park, who, in spite of his own verdict on her case, kept her alive and in comparative freedom from pain for nearly three years. Selina Dolaro paid her tribute to Mr. Palmer in the dedication of "*Bella-Demonia*"; it is here that I pay her no lesser tribute to Dr. Donahue.

Of recent events it is not necessary to speak at length. Of the enthusiasm created by "*Fashion*," on the 19th May, 1887; of its failure when produced at Wallack's under H. E. Abbey's management, on the 28th December, 1887; of the causes that contributed to that failure,—it is not for me to speak now. Suffice it to say, that Madame Dolaro, in speaking of the manner in which her play was saved from utter damnation by two of the cast, used to say: "Were it not for that man and that woman, I think I should have died of grief with the New Year, 1888."

It was at this time that she produced her remarkable "*Bachelor's Guide*," entitled "*Mes Amours: Poems Passionate and Playful*, with my answers to some of them," which called down a storm of adverse criticism, and accusations of *mala fides*. Now that she is dead, it may be said that these poems were written entirely by two literary friends in years gone by, who gave her full liberty to use them in the book, and the balance were written by herself and by a friend for the volume itself. It was *not* a publication of her love-letters, but was none the less humorous on that account.

Her next work was the making of "*Bella-Demonia*," about which book so much has recently been written and said. I think I cannot do better than to reproduce in this place a letter which I wrote to *The Journalist* on the subject, and which I entitled

**THE STORY OF MADAME SELINA DOLARO'S
LOST MANUSCRIPT.**

The announcement made by Messrs. Lippincott of Madame Dolaro's novel "Bella-Demonia," coming, as it did, simultaneously with her death, has naturally been made the subject of considerable comment in literary and dramatic circles, and among the notes written *a propos* of this book one that has attracted the most attention has been the story of its loss at the moment that arrangements had been practically completed for its publication. As certain irresponsible persons have taken advantage of this tragic occurrence to give their own distorted versions of the story, it seems to me that I cannot do better than to tell, as her literary executor and co-worker, the facts of the case as they exist in my own absolute knowledge, supported by documentary evidence.

Immediately after the production of "Fashion" at Wallack's Theatre, Madame Dolaro turned her attention to the completion of a drama that she had long contemplated, entitled "Bella-Demonia." The plot of the play dealt with the period of the Turk-Russian War of 1877-8, and particularly turned upon certain dramatic incidents in the lives of Col. Valentine Baker, and of Fanny Lear (Hattie Blackford), of which Madame Dolaro had peculiar and esoteric information. As the drama unfolded, she continually deplored to me the fact that she was bound down to four acts at most, whilst the story she was engaged upon would fill ten at least had they been practicable. It was on this subject that she had her little humorous tussle with Mr. Dion Boucicault in the New York *Herald* of the 25th and 26th July, 1888. It was then that she conceived the idea of elaborating her play, which was about a quarter finished, into a romance with a prologue impossible in a drama, and the writing of her novel was begun on the 14th of July. It was finished on the 20th of August, having occupied about eight hard-worked hours every day, and the conclusion was sent to New York—the previous three quarters having been already sent to Messrs. Belford, Clarke & Company, and accepted for publication in book form. On the 31st, Madame Dolaro received a letter from Col. Cockerill, telling her that his reader "passed a very favorable judgment, thought it a very interesting story, and recommended its publication." She was in the seventh heaven of delight and hope. On the fourth of September she went to New York to see about it, and greeted

me at the Sayville station on her return with the words, "Bella-Demonia is lost!" She told me of Col. Cockerill's dismay, and of his efforts to find the thief, for that it had been stolen there seemed no doubt—a MS. of 200 leaves does not get mislaid; and Col. Cockerill had laid it, for safer keeping, among his most valuable papers. On the ninth a letter confirmed the loss, and on the tenth the MS. was begun again from the first page—for we had kept no copy, so anxious (and with good cause!) was Madame Dolaro to deliver the MS. and obtain the emolument offered her in more than one direction.

The law in the matter is clear. A newspaper is not liable for any MS. not actually contracted or paid for, but in a subsequent interview with Col. Cockerill, that gentleman offered *himself*, most liberally, the sum of one hundred dollars to pay for a stenographer to retake the novel, and gave himself much trouble to find one for her. I have his letters on the subject before me. On the tenth the MS. was begun again, and on the twenty-sixth of October was finished. By that time, of course, arrangements had been made with other authors, and after another chat with Col. Cockerill, whose literary advice was ever at her disposal even when he was most occupied, she sold the magazine rights in the story to the Lippincotts on the 8th of November.

To the day of her death she was never weary of singing the hymn of Col. Cockerill's kindness to her. There is no doubt that this terrible disappointment would have proved more speedily fatal had it not been for his brave words of encouragement and unremitting efforts to repair her loss. It was my privilege to defend her when she was alive from more than one Grub-street attack, and I do not propose to allow any one to grind their axes over her grave with any perversion of the story of her relations with *The World*. The editor does not exist who was her enemy; but Col. Cockerill was one of the editors whom she felt proud to number among her personal friends.

EVERETT HOUSE, N. Y. C., 7th Feb., 1889.

The story of Selina Dolaro's life is told.

"Spring will return and woods grow green
From shore to shore,
But she, unseeing and unseen,
Returns no more!"

Thus wrote William Winter on the death of Ada Clare, and his poem might have served as Selina Dolaro's Epitaph. The story of her last sickness and death is told in the preceding "*In Memoriam.*" At the request of some of her friends I append a set of couplets published in Alfred Trumble's paper, *Today*:

TO HIS DOG.

WELL, well, old doggie? You wag your tail, and if you could only talk,
You'd say with your tongue what you say with your eyes—that
you want to go out for a walk.
You know not (how could you?) the hand that you loved, that
you warmed with your soft, moist breath,
Will never caress you as once it did, for it's quiet and cold in
death.

You can't make out why I don't talk back, as you climb up on
to my bed,
And don't stretch out my hand to stroke you, and pat your
woolly head.
There's a world of sympathy, dog-like and mute, that shines
from your purple eyes,
But you don't understand (how can you, doggie?) that any one
ever dies.

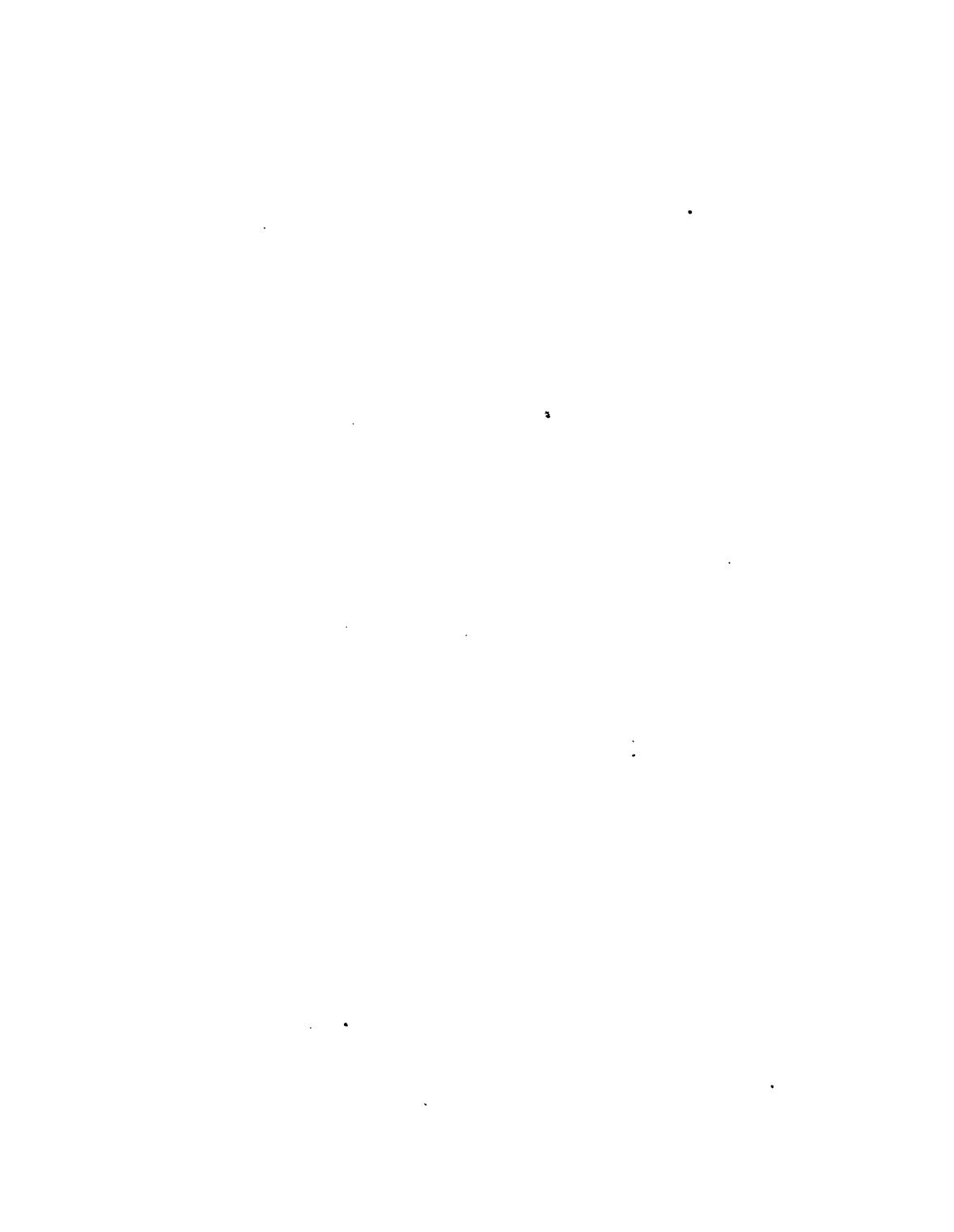
You'll want for a time to go to her house (you could find your
way alone),
And wag your tail and whinny to her, and ask her to give you
a bone.
But that's all over, those days will never come back for you or
for me,
Those days that we spent all together, boy, in the summer-time
by the sea.

You surely remember those days, old dog, how she scolded
you when you leapt
To greet her each morn with your muddy feet, from her door-
mat where you slept?
How she lay in her hammock with you underneath, never
lonely, and knew no fear
When I was away, for you guarded her well, and let not a soul
come near.

But you and I have the memory, boy, of the love that to us she
gave,
And we shall prize it more dearly now that they've laid her in
her grave.
You didn't see her, but *I* did, doggie, she lay so marvellous
fair,
With lilies strewn on her hands and feet and framing her
bronze-gold hair.
You didn't see when she went away, oh ! so far away, and
alack !
She's gone where perhaps we may follow her, doggie, but she
—will never come back.

EDWARD HERON-ALLEN.

NEW YORK CITY, March, 1889.



THE VENGEANCE
OR
MAURICE DENALGUEZ.

CHAPTER I.

"I WONDER why we do this," observed Sir Reginald to his companion, as they turned for the twentieth time that morning at Hyde Park corner, and set their faces for the Westward traverse of Rotten Row. "It has always struck me that it would be an interesting thing to find out who was the first man who ever 'did the Row' in the morning."

"I neither know nor care," returned his friend, a man considerably older than Sir Reginald Faithorne; a man who might, in fact, have been his father. "I neither know nor care; and as it amuses me afresh every day, I do not choose to analyze the subject further."

"Egad! Mr. Wurmsley, I congratulate you. What you can see amusing in pacing half a hundred times up and down a broiling walk,

like geese training for *pâté de foie gras*, I cannot see. One sees the same men and women, and one cuts the same men and women and is cut by the same men and women, day after day. It is enough to make one commit suicide—social suicide, at any rate. Why, I have sympathized often enough with the Frenchman who shot himself because he was dead tired of constantly buttoning and unbuttoning. I wonder some Englishman does not take Prussian acid as a protest against this everlasting walking up and down."

"Well," replied the older man who had been addressed as Wurmsley, "I don't agree with you. Every woman that we know becomes interesting anew to me, every time she puts on a fresh frock; and every man becomes the same every time he walks with a new woman. Look there, for instance," continued he, stopping at the railings as he and his companion raised their hats to the occupants of a barouche which passed at the moment; "look at Ethel Marsden, for instance. What a bewitching bonnet!"

Sir Reginald Faithorne made no reply.

"Why, Faithorne," said his friend, "this apathy is strange, coming from one whom they credit with being so stanch a friend of the fair Ethel," and an imbecile smile spread itself over the middle-aged features.



"I was not looking at Ethel," returned Faithorne, at last, "but at the companion, to whom, I presume, the barouche belongs. I never saw anything so lovely in my life. Just at this moment I feel as if I would give an empire of liabilities, for an introduction; though as she is under the wing of the charming Thello, I do not suppose it would be a very hard end to accomplish."

Whilst he spoke, Mr. Wurmsley had been showing visible signs of impatience, and at last he broke forth in a tone laden with all the dignity he could command at a moment's notice, "I think it as well to inform you, Sir Reginald, that that is my daughter."

"Your daughter?"

"Yes, my daughter, Mrs. Warburton;" and a moment later the old gentleman sought a hiatus in the stream of passing carriages, and made his escape by the Albert Gate entrance.

"By Jove!" said Sir Reginald, to himself, as he looked after the retreating figure. "I wonder whether old Worms was in earnest." A few moments later he was accosted by a club acquaintance to whom he remarked,

"Did you see Thello Marsden, driving past just now?"

"Well, rather," replied his friend. "I should like to see Thello in the Park, *not* aggressively visible to the naked eye."

"Well, who was the woman with her?"

"I do not know her myself," was the reply, "but Gray, who knows her, said that it was old Wurmsley's daughter, a Mrs. Warburton."

"Dear me," replied Sir Reginald, "you don't say so. Where has she been all this time that we have not seen her before?"

"With Warburton, I presume."

"Oh!" ejaculated Sir Reginald. "And who the deuce is Warburton, when he's at home?"

"My dear fellow," said his friend, suavely, laying his hand on the baronet's arm, "all that I know of Warburton and all that I care to know, is this: Mr. Warburton is a man who allows his wife to drive in the Park in a barouche with Thello Marsden."

Sir Reginald Faithorne was silent for a few moments. Then, turning abruptly to his friend, he said, "Well, good-by, I must leave you now."

"Where are you off to?" said the gentleman addressed.

"I am going down to the club for an hour or so, and then I am going to call on Thello Marsden."

"All right—good by ~~and~~ good luck."

CHAPTER II.

ETHEL, or as she was more familiarly called, "Thello" Marsden, was a type of woman not uncommon, but always surprising—like some peculiar forms of marine vegetation, not however that the fair Thello was ever marine in her capacity of giving credence to the histories of her friends, or that she was ever at sea in her calculations.

Thello Marsden lived in Hans Place; in a tiny house, it is true, but a charmingly comfortable one withal. She seldom entertained, but when she did so, it was with a perfection and a science which made her dinners the talk of the town. Thello's dinner parties consisted invariably of herself and seven guests, two of whom were women and five men.

"You see," she used to say, "when you get five men together, two of them are bound to want to talk to each other about something, whilst the other three attend to the women; and then a woman can keep up a conversation and listen to that of another at the same time, with the greatest ease. But

a woman *cannot* converse herself and take in the remarks of two other women at the same time ; so that my dinner parties are politically and geographically, perfect."

Thello Marsden never received in state, but was at home on Saturdays, and on Saturdays the little house in Hans Place became an Eveless Eden of the best known and most sought after Adams in town ; whilst to be asked to call upon Thello on Sunday, meant that you were anything from a leading socialist to a cabinet minister. Thello Marsden spoke five languages with perfect correctness ; she played the piano in a manner that left one speechless, and before she became Thello Marsden a maiden aunt is reported to have said that when Thello sang, it was neither more nor less than an indecent orgie of sound. However, Thello seldom either played or sang to her visitors, and used her music rather as a lethal than as a soothing accomplishment. For if she invited a man to her house for the purpose of entertaining him with music, she would perform, clad in the severest black, her mass of red hair parted severely but becomingly down the middle, her face white, and her eyes black. It is reported that no man between the ages of five and twenty and fifty had ever withstood this combination of science and art.

Thello Marsden wore the most weird and bewitching toilettes. What jewelry she wore—which was little—was of a quality that would make a stockbroker's hair stand on end. It may be remarked in conclusion that Max Marsden, her whilome spouse, had died five years before, leaving her a net income of three hundred and fifty pounds a year.

On the afternoon when my story opens, Thello lay in a happy, indolent attitude, in a huge lounge, that occupied about three-fourths of her microscopic drawing-room. The lounge was covered with a maroon plush; Thello was covered with old-gold plush and coffee-colored lace. In the pauses of her conversation, she was idly smoking a cigarette, and her bronze-stockinged feet, in their gold-brocaded shoes, were fidgeting with a cushion upon which she had thrown them. Altogether the artistic effect was such that even Sir Reginald Faithorne, who sat in a low arm-chair in front of her, was impressed with a sense of the harmonious whole, and remarked with an airy irresponsibility, due, doubtless, to his Irish descent, "By Jove! Thello, if I had not seen Mrs. Warburton in the park with you this morning, I should not know that she existed, looking at you here."

"So Mrs. Warburton is your latest and best, *mon beau sabreur*, known only by sight,

but to anticipation dear," and Thello gave the cushion at her feet a little mischievous kick, as she grinned and showed a double rank of tiny white teeth to her listener.

"Now, don't chaff, Thello," said Sir Reginald. "I want to know something about this beautiful young creature whom you have taken under your protecting wing. Who is she?"

Thello Marsden paused before she spoke. Then she said, "Edith Warburton is the wife—I might say, aggressively the wife—of Philip Warburton, of St. Nicholas Lane, in the City. He is a stockbroker, and an enormously clever one to boot. I am cultivating his wife because I want to know him; that is to say, to know him sufficiently to get him to help me in some of my investments. You know I have to be very careful about such matters, so as to eke out my three hundred and fifty a year."

"Oh, ah, yes, of course," said Sir Reginald; "that goes without saying. You know it is quite amazing the way you do it." He did not allow a single muscle of his face to twitch, as he made the remark, but went on in the same tone. "When you desire to attach a man to your body-guard, you do not generally do it through his wife, Thello. What is the meaning of this new departure?"

"The meaning of this," replied the woman, "is very simple, and it lies in my opening remark, namely, that Edith is aggressively the wife of Philip Warburton, and Philip Warburton has only one idea in the world, beyond stocks, and that is his wife."

"Oh!"

"So you see," pursued Ethel, "you have rather a hard task in front of you."

"A hard task? What do you mean?" enquired Sir Reginald.

"Nothing at all," replied the woman. "By the way," she continued, as if changing the subject, "Mrs. Warburton asked me this morning to run down and see a new place that her husband has bought at Wimbledon. What do you think of taking me down there to-morrow afternoon? We will take Clare Beaufoy to play propriety, and we will go early, so as to catch the dragon away in the city."

"To-morrow," replied Sir Reginald, as if searching his memory for previous engagements. "I think I have to-morrow free, in which case, if I can be of any service to you, pray command me."

Thello burst into a silvery laugh. "You dear old man," she said. "What a fraud you are!"

At that moment a servant entered the

room, bearing an envelope on a tray. "The messenger waits," said the grave domestic, and with a whispered, "Excuse me," Thello opened the missive.

"Dear me," she said. "This is the most inconsiderate thing I ever knew Veloutine to do. She seems to think that she has only to write out bills for me to pay them. However, I suppose, like all unpleasant duties, it must be gone through. Charles," turning to the domestic, "give me my check-book, it is on the writing-table; and my stylograph," and lying back among the cushions, Thello Marsden drew a check and handed it with the bill to the servant who left the room. A moment later he reappeared.

"The messenger says, ma'am, that Madame Veloutine would be much obliged if you would let her have the amount in notes, as it is after banking hours, and she has a heavy bill to meet this afternoon."

"How absurd," began Thello, but she was interrupted by Sir Reginald, who observed,

"Perhaps I can change your check, how much is it?"

"Three hundred," said Thello.

"Well, it happens I have got that," said Sir Reginald, "in view of a little game we are to have to-night at the club. However, I had as soon spend my money on one little

game as on another. Give me your check, and here are the notes."

"Thanks, Rex," said Thello, as the servant left the room. "You are sure it won't inconvenience you until to-morrow?"

"Not in the least," was the reply. "I am charmed to be of any assistance, even temporarily." A few moments later, after completing their arrangements for the morrow, he left her alone.

As he stepped out upon the pavement, Sir Reginald Faithorne threw back his head and laughed long and loud. "She is incomparable," said he to himself, as he took the check from his pocket and tore it into little pieces. "London and Westminster Bank," ejaculated he, as the last pieces fluttered over the railings among the shrubbery. "I wonder if she ever had an account there. If I were the villain in a book I should keep this to brandish it over her head at the right moment, and should then probably discover that she had dated it by accident ten years ago when she really *had* a sovereign there." And taking up the laugh again, where he had dropped it, Sir Reginald Faithorne jumped into a passing cab and was driven back to the Raleigh Club.

CHAPTER III.

WIMBLEDON LODGE was, perhaps, the most beautiful of the many beautiful houses that would look out over Wimbledon Common, were it not for the bank of high elms that screens them from the road.

Wimbledon Lodge stood in some eight or ten acres of ground. About two acres were laid out as flower gardens; another two as labyrinthine shrubberies and the rest was as nearly wild as possible. Some artistic masterpieces of American sculpture, such as Bates, Elwell or St. Gaudens might have cut later, were disposed here and there among the shrubs, and a terrace of little cascades led from the drawing-room windows into this suburban paradise. Everything that art could do to assist nature, had been done under the watchful eye of Philip Warburton, to make his wife's house a casket worthy of the jewel it was to contain.

The jewel had only deposited herself in the casket three weeks previously, and on the afternoon of which I write, her father, Mr. Botolph Wurmsley, and his second daughter,

Marion, were paying their first visit to the apparently enviable Mrs. Warburton. The chatelaine of this retreat was still putting the finishing touches to her afternoon toilette, when the two descended the steps into the garden.

"A very pretty place," the old gentleman was saying. "A very pretty place, indeed. Ah, my dear Marion, your sister, Edith, has made a most excellent marriage. Philip Warburton is a man of a thousand—a splendid fellow, and quite a gentleman. A little old, perhaps, but then she needs the care of a *man*."

"Old!" interrupted Marion. "My dear papa, what are you talking about? Phil is quite young."

"I mean," returned her father, "old in manner, not in years. The fact is, he has given so much time to business, and is so steady and respectable, that he seems almost to belong to a past age. His very language is old-fashioned, and if he has a fault, it is that he is too serious."

"I am sure," broke in the girl, impetuously, "Philip has *no* faults!"

"Well, well," returned the old gentleman, "faults would be too strong an expression, and I have every reason to be satisfied with Edith's marriage. Now, if you were to become Lady Something-or-other—"

"Lady Something-or-other, indeed!" said Marion. "What an old match-maker you are; and who is Lord Something-or-other to be?"

"Oh," returned her father, "my lord has not arrived yet, but with the chances which Philip's wealth give you, my greatest wish may yet be gratified."

"Ah," said Marion, "you do love a title, don't you, father?"

"Marion," replied Wurmsley *père*, sententiously, "a father's ambition is not a fit subject of ridicule."

They had reached the bottom of the steps, as Marion replied, "You dear old thing! I was not laughing at you, but you made me think of Aunt Jane. She said, the other day, 'Ah, Dora made a good marriage as far as money is concerned, but what is money? Can money buy ruins?' and I said, 'I don't know, aunt, but it might be useful to repair them,' and she was so horrified that she nearly sat on her last new bonnet, and positively gasped as she said, 'There spoke your father, the commoner. Both you and Dora inherit much of my beauty, and should have made great successes in the society of which I am a member. But Dora married *wealth*,' —she said 'wealth' as if it were slightly improper,—'and it now remains for you to bring

a title into the family.''" The girl interrupted herself with a light laugh, as she continued, "As if Philip were not better than all the titles in the world. There," added she, as she drew her father's head down by his whiskers and kissed him, "I am going to run away from you now, to look for Edith. Why, goodness me! there *is* Philip. Where is Edith, Philip?—All right I am going to find her," and the girl ran away as Philip Warburton descended the terrace steps.

Philip Warburton was a man of five and thirty, and everything about him bespoke the keen man of business. A clear-cut face, smooth shaved and lit by keen, black eyes; the hair, worn rather short, was slightly tinged with gray, and, unlike the average man in his own country house, he was buttoned up in the most irreproachable of frock coats.

"I am glad to see you at our new house," said he as he shook his father-in-law's hand. "How do you like as much as you have seen of it?"

"It is perfectly delightful," returned Wurmsley. "I had no idea it was such a big place. But don't you find it a little fatiguing going to and from London every day, eh?"

"No," replied Warburton, "not enough to matter. Edith wanted to come into the country, and truth to tell, I was not sorry to get

her away from some of her friends who are in too good society to be good either for her or for me. She does not seem to be in such good spirits lately."

The two men seated themselves on a rustic bench, as the younger continued, "She was most enthusiastic when she came here, but her enthusiasm seems to have dropped off. I wish you would find out for me if there is any wish, whim or caprice that she may hesitate to let me know. She said something about owning some property, the other day, which made me think it might amuse her to play chatelaine, so I have made over to her this place, and I mean to give her the title deeds as her birthday present to-day. Do you think she will be pleased?"

"My dear Warburton," was the reply, "you indulge her caprices too much. You spoil her."

"I hope not," returned Warburton, gravely. "If she can, one day, look back and recall no act or thought of mine, in which she was not all beloved, she may learn to value my worship as I pray she may. Sometimes I think I was wrong to marry her, so young, but I can take care of her—I think I can take care of her."

"Dear me," said Mr. Wurmsley, rising, "do you know I had entirely forgotten that it

was her birthday. It was most inconsiderate of Edith not to have reminded me of it. I am going straight back to London to get her something."

"But you will see her first," said Warburton.

"Not for worlds," answered his father-in-law. "I will be back in time for dinner. I do not want her to know I had forgotten it. But I must see Marion before I go."

"Won't you go and see the new stables I have just built?" said Warburton.

"Yes," replied the old gentleman. "Send Marion to me there. I want to see her alone. Where are they?"

"Go straight down that path," directed his son-in-law, "and you will arrive there in time, and you can order the carriage for yourself."

The old gentleman started off as Warburton turned to the house. As he did so, he caught sight of Marion Wurmsley at the drawing-room window. "Your father wants to speak to you, at the stables," called he. "Go to him there. I am going to look after Edith's birthday present. The lawyer must be here by this time; don't say anything to her about our surprise. I would not give up the pleasure of to-day for anything."

He entered the house as Marion tripped down the steps and disappeared in the direction which her father had taken.

"What a great, splendid nature he has," said she to herself as she went. "How happy Edith must be."

As she said these words, the object of her reflections appeared at the window leading out upon the terrace, and Mrs. Warburton emerged to join her sister. Arrived at the bottom of the steps she threw herself into the bench which Mr. Wurmsley and her husband had just vacated, and stretching herself into an attitude of languid discontent, she exclaimed, as if in answer to her sister's thought,

"Oh, how wretched I am!"

The two sisters as we see them together on this sunny afternoon, present a striking contrast; Marion Wurmsley *petite*, and essentially "cosey-looking," save for the mass of golden curls which spiritualized her appearance; Edith Warburton, on the other hand, stately and tall; of a figure such as French painters love to idealize in their work, with finely modelled hands and feet, her raven black hair carried straight off her high, white forehead, and a pair of deep, grave eyes, enhancing the severity with which the nose and chin were cut, a severity, tempered, however, by the delicate chiselling of her lips.

"How wretched I am!" exclaimed this royal-looking creature, as she threw herself upon the bench, and her sister Marion stood

listening to her, as if petrified with amazement.

"Wretched!" she echoed. "Wretched! *you* of all women in the world? Only two years married, to a perfectly charming man, a man enormously rich, who has but one wish in life, and that to anticipate yours! What is there that you can possibly want?"

"I don't know," replied Mrs. Warburton, "I am bored to death, that is all. I am filled with indistinct, vague wishes; but when they shape themselves I find nothing that I do not possess or that my own husband would not give me, so I have come to the conclusion that I have a deeply-rooted disease, which for want of a better name we will call 'boredom.'"

"It appears to me," said Marion, gravely, "that all this discontent is very sudden. You were not like this a few months ago, and I cannot see what can have given you such ideas." The girl had dropped into a chair as she spoke, and sat with her great, blue eyes fixed upon her sister's gloomy face.

"All the women I see," said Edith, looking at the ground before her, "know how to arrange their lives so that they shall be their own mistresses. Clare Beaufoy, and Ethel Marsden, for instance, who are my best friends, and perfectly devoted to me."

"Well," said Marion, "I think we women

have rather the best of the bargain. We not only are the better half, but we have a better half, and all we have to do is to open our mouths and shut our eyes, and allow ourselves to be made happy."

"Nonsense," said Edith. "These are but the dreams of a child, that you can never realize."

"Why?" queried Marion. "It seems quite possible to me—and I am just about to try its possibilities."

"How?"

"Do you remember," said the little girl, edging her chair closer to her sister, "a great friend of Philip's, a Captain—"

"Denalguez? A Spaniard, or looked like one—a dreary looking creature, if I remember rightly."

"But," said Marion, "he was so wretched then, and though he appeared to hate every one, he seemed to like me—"

"And that flattered you, of course," put in Edith.

"It made me very happy."

"He made love to you?"

"Not one word of love was spoken between us," replied Marion thoughtfully. "Yet I think we understood each other, for when he went to Russia he said, 'Will you wait three years, and answer me a question then,

that I cannot ask you now?' and I am sure I know what he meant."

"Have you heard from him since?" said Edith, aroused to some show of interest by her sister's recital.

"Of course," said Marion, a trifle nervously, "without asking any questions I have heard scraps of news about him. Some mines or something he had in Russia have turned out well. You know he is in the embassy at St. Petersburg. A big letter, bearing the St. Petersburg post-mark came yesterday for father. He has not spoken to me about it yet, but I am certain it asks after me."

"What makes you so sure?" said Edith.

"Don't you see," returned her sister, "it only wants six months to complete the three years he asked me to wait?"

"And you would marry Captain Denalquez?" said Edith.

"With all my heart," replied her sister, as she rose and turned towards the house.

"Then Heaven defend you!" said the elder, rising too. "If you only knew what marriage meant! Hush!—here's my husband. You see one never has a moment to one's self." Philip Warburton had appeared at the window as she spoke.

"It is good of you, Marion, to come and stay a few days with us," he said to his sister.

in-law. "Edith, are you still angry with me? She was *so* cross this morning," explained he to Marion.

"So I supposed," answered Marion, "but I hope it is all over now."

"Never," said Mrs. Warburton, emphatically.

"Never is a long day," said Philip Warburton. "My only crime, as far as I can make it out, is to have brought you into the country, which is exactly what you asked me to do till I have done it."

"I did want to come into the country," said Edith, peevishly, "but not alone."

"And I," said Philip, with a smile on his lips, but pained look in his eyes, "am I nobody to you?"

"Oh, what nonsense!" said Edith. "A husband and wife are one, and I hate being alone."

Philip Warburton's face took on a harder expression as he answered, "An argument well taught, and well learned, but which I do not think it necessary for me to notice."

"A husband's tyranny, to which I shall certainly not submit," said Edith in imitation of the same tone.

"Tyranny!" remonstrated the man. "Give me one instance, and I will never offend again."

"A thousand, if necessary."

"Well?"

At this point Edith Warburton broke down.

"Oh, how miserable I am!" she sobbed. And Marion, drawing close to her, slipped her arm around her waist.

"Ah, ah," said her husband, rising with something like impatience in his tone and gesture, "at last we get to something definite. Edith, for some time you have been receiving a number of people of whom I disapprove entirely. A woman is never lost through herself, but through the influence of the so-called society friends who surround her. Their bad example is the current which hurls her into the maelstrom of ruin and degradation. You follow these friends who belong to this modern pest of society, 'the advertised Beauties,' this imitation of womankind bereft of its womanhood. But I am responsible for your honor, which belongs to me. I must keep you from falling into the abyss which threatens you—with gentleness if you will, with force if you compel me. Is not this my crime? This," continued he, turning to Marion, "is the reason she is angry with me?" And then laying his hand on his wife's shoulder, he said, "Darling, you know it pains me to have to speak to you so. I hate

to give you any annoyance, but," and his face hardened again, "I have made up my mind."

"Oh," said Edith, looking up, "you have? You have made up your mind?"

"Yes," said Mr. Philip Warburton, "as I am obliged to be away a great deal, I do not wish your friends—you know the ladies I allude to without my having to mention their names—to visit you, except by my invitation."

"And you would never invite them?"

"Quite true. Some of them are only weak, silly women, they are the least dangerous, but the others are altogether impossible—Mrs. Marsden for instance."

"But her husband was in a very good position," expostulated Edith, "and did business with you."

"Yes," said Warburton, "and a very good sort of a business man he was. One whom I should like to see every day in my office or his. But that does not necessitate your seeing his wife, of whom I disapprove. Be reasonable, Edith. As for Mrs. Beaufoy, your other friend, I *forbid* you to receive her."

"Forbid me?"

"Yes, and one day you will thank me for it. Be sure, dear, I will repay your sacrifice."

"I don't want anything," said Edith, snapishly.

"But you will do as I ask, won't you, Edith?" said Philip Warburton, with something like pleading in his voice. "You know that I will indulge your caprice to any extent, but do not go any further. Marion, I want to speak to you a moment."

"Why, of course," said Marion, going to him. And Edith, who had risen, and was idly tearing up a flower and throwing it into the cascade, piece by piece, said in a scornful tone of voice,

"More conspiring against me, I suppose."

"Probably," replied her husband, "but my accomplice should reassure you." He took her hand, and was raising it to his lips when she drew it away pettishly. Philip Warburton sighed, as he took his eyes from those of his wife, and then beckoning Marion, he disappeared into the house.

Edith turned and sauntered slowly down the middle of the lawn. "And am I to submit to such tyranny?" she said to herself. "Am I to obey him, when all the women I know command their husbands? Well, hardly. It is not likely, and it is not possible. I never can go on like this, and one way or another, there must be an end to it. Good gracious!" She stopped at the end of the lawn as an unexpected vision rose before her, apparently from the depths of the shrubbery.

CHAPTER IV.

"How are you? I supposed I should find you meditating on your sins. How are you, hermit?" said a voice, and Ethel Marsden, for it was she, slipped her arm around Edith Warburton's waist and kissed her with an effusion which would have struck an on-looker as almost genuine.

"Just fancy your coming such a long way to see me!" said Edith. "It is very good of you."

"Oh, it is only about five miles," replied the adorable Thello, who, clad in the whitest and filmiest of summer frocks, was looking her very best. "And as you would not come to me, I had to come to you. It is a case of Mahomet with you, and as no true believer travels without his carpet, I have brought mine—my carpet-baronet. Where are you, carpet?" she concluded, raising her voice.

"What do you mean?" said Edith.

"Why, Rex—or I should say, Sir Reginald Faithorne," answered Thello. "He is my carpet-knight—or carpet-baronet. I suppose he is seeing after the horses. That is why we

came in by the stable entrance. One of them fell at an awkward turn just before we reached your gates."

"No injury, I hope," commented Edith.

"No, nothing serious," replied Thello, "just enough to tell one that one has a heart, by setting it jumping a little."

"And who is Sir Reginald Faithorne?" said Edith, as they reached one of the benches in the shrubbery and sat down.

"A delightful youth," replied Thello, "of the Crœsus persuasion. Why, what is the matter with you, have you been crying?"

"Oh, Thello," said Edith, her eyes beginning to sparkle again, "I am in such trouble."

"What is the cause?" said the new arrival.

"You ask me that?"

"Oh, I see—your husband, of course."

"I want you to set me right," said Edith, leaning forward, and laying one hand on her friend's knee as she spoke, looking her earnestly in the eyes. "I want you to set me right. You know so much more than I do about the world; you seem to have such fun, and you always do as you please. If I try to assert myself I get sat upon and snubbed. You always tell me that I am dowdy and out of fashion. Your husband always allowed

you to do as you liked—mine bullies me. How did you manage to get yours into such wonderful order? You say all women to be in the fashion should have from one to half a dozen admirers. I don't see how you get men to waste their time over you; but then I am so heavy, I never did know how to flirt, and if a man were to say he loved me, I should be dreadfully sorry for him. You, I suppose, would not care a bit. You don't pity the wretched creature you have encouraged."

"Baby," interrupted Thello, with a bewitching little laugh, which showed her pretty teeth, and the tip of her tongue, "do you suppose a man of the Rex Faithorne type deserves pity? Amusing as the game of flirtation is, it is one of 'kill who can.' Choose your fate, my dear. For my part, I prefer to kill. Take things easier. Faithorne is a delightful person, has loads of money, which he spends and lends with equal freedom. I don't know how I should have managed Veloutine's last bill if he had not come to the rescue."

Edith Warburton clapped her hands to her ears. "Oh, Thello," she said, "you do say the most dreadful things. If a stranger were to hear you, what would he think? You must not talk so wildly. The idea of your taking money—"

"Well, I pay, of course—when I can."

"You are so clever," pursued Edith, dismissing the problem of Thello's financial arrangements. "You might help me so much. Won't you?"

"My dear child," replied Mrs. Marsden, "I never prevent any one's seeing what I do, or how I do it, but as to advice, I never give it."

"Well, I think you might in this instance," said Edith.

"No," replied the other, "my principle is fixed. Besides, what is the good of talking sense to a child."

"What do you mean by 'a child'?" asked Edith indignantly.

"Exactly what I say," retorted Ethel. "You are just what you were when you left school."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Edith.

"Not a bit of it," returned Ethel. "You are just a child from top to toe, only that all your fun is lost, your name is changed, and you have a new master, who substitutes slavery and solitude for grammar and geography."

"Well," said Edith, getting a trifle exasperated, "how can I relieve myself from my servitude, which will be harder to be borne than ever, now that he wants me to give up my friends."

"Give up your friends!" echoed the confidante. "You are not serious, surely?"

"But I am, perfectly," returned the châtelaine of Wimbledon Lodge. "He has begged me not to see you again, and has forbidden me to receive Clare."

"Oh," said Ethel, grinning again. "He has only begged you not to see me. What a charming distinction. It is one for which I am most grateful. I hope you laugh at him."

"I don't dare."

"She don't dare! Delicious. If that is the case, I had better go," and Thello made a pretence of rising.

"You are angry at my weakness?"

"Oh, no," said the woman, "I think it charming. Such a good story is a positive boon. How lucky it is that Clare came with me."

"Oh, what *shall* I do?" said Edtih.

"Choose for yourself, my dear," returned her mentor. "Obey your old-fashioned husband and 'chronicle small beer,' as they say, or take your proper position, and be your own mistress. Rex Faithorne can make you the envy of Mayfair. He is the most amusing man you ever knew. A type—his reputation is so well known that his name alone is enough. A pretty woman does not exist until she is a friend of Faithorne's. She is the chrysalis

and Faithorne is the sun that warms it into the butterfly. Interesting, isn't he? He is a tremendous adorer of yours."

"Of mine," echoed Edith, her eyes dilating in astonishment.

"Yes," pursued Ethel Marsden, in a matter-of-fact tone, "he is always running after you, trying to get presented, and as he has hitherto failed, in sheer desperation he pursues me and Clare and adores us both, because we are your friends. Is not that devotion with a vengeance?"

"I will not receive him," said Edith, rising. "It is not right, and now after what you tell me of him, I am determined that I will not."

"*You* determined?" said Thello, with a little mischievous laugh, "not a bit. It is only an indirect way of obeying your husband's orders."

"You know better," said Edith indignantly.

"What rubbish!" said her friend. "I know you better than you know yourself. However, now is your chance to show your wifely submission, for here come Clare and Sir Reginald."

As she spoke, the two persons she had named, turned the corner, into the alley, at the end of which Thello and Edith found themselves.

"Delightful, charming," Clare Beaufoy was

saying to her companion. "Is it not a lovely place?"

"Lovely," replied he with conviction, his eyes fixed upon Edith as she stood a few paces from him with Ethel Marsden.

"Let me present Sir Reginald Faithorne," said the latter. "He has given me no peace until I brought him."

"It is very good of you," said Edith, a trifle ceremoniously "to come so far simply to say 'How do you do?'"

"Far," exclaimed Faithorne, "it is only a charming drive."

"I cannot tell you all the pretty things that Ethel has been saying of you, Sir Reginald," said Edith, as the quartette turned towards the house. And then turning to Ethel she whispered, "I will tell him that you called him a hearth-rug—or a mat—which was it?"

"What do you say to our unexpected visit?" said Clare.

"Why, it is perfectly delightful," answered Edith, a troubled shade crossing her face as she thought of the coming explanation with Philip Warburton.

"It is delightful, indeed," said Sir Reginald. "It has brought back all Mrs. Marsden's good temper."

"Why, has she been annoyed?" said Edith.

"Very much," replied the man. "When I called on her this morning she had just seen by the papers that a very important appointment had been given to a man she detests, a Captain Denalguez."

"Of the embassy of St. Petersburg?" said Edith turning to him.

"You know him?" said Ethel, opening her purple eyes wide, as she turned to her hostess.

"Oh, yes," said Edith, "he is in love with my sister. I speak, of course, in confidence."

"You have the advantage of me," said Thello significantly. "I do not know the gentleman personally."

"No," said Faithorne thoughtfully, "I believe it was a brother of his who had the honor of being your friend."

"That is enough!" said Ethel rapidly to the baronet.

"Why," remonstrated he, "I never disguise my hate or my love, and I should like to believe that you were as frank. You may just as well admit that Captain Denalguez and you are mortal enemies."

"You have really never seen him?" said Clare Beaufoy to her friend.

"Never," replied Thello laconically.

"Gracious," said the lively Clare. "A

man you have never seen is your enemy? This is most interesting. Fancy being able to hate in this hot weather! How charmingly young!"

"And upon my honor" put in Faithorne, "I pity him, for Madame is merciless. She is really a most refreshing hater. She brings back a perfume of the Borgias, or of any other bygone criminal epoch."

"Are you trying to irritate me, Faithorne?" said Ethel, a dangerous light coming into her eyes.

"On the contrary," replied he, "I am complimenting you."

"Well," said Clare, "I am glad you told us."

"You know," said Faithorne, coolly, "one must have some coloring to distinguish one from the idiots of the world."

During the above conversation they had reached the terrace in front of the house, and as they turned at the corner of the walk, they were met by Marion, who was running out, but who stopped short as she saw the group before her.

"Hush! be careful," said Edith, hastily. "My sister Marion, allow me to present to you Sir Reginald Faithorne."

Marion bowed stiffly to the man, and shook hands with the two women. Then turning

to Edith, she said, "Come quickly. I have just seen in your room a large, legal-looking envelope addressed to you in Philip's hand. It has a sort of birthday appearance."

"Your birthday?" said Thello gayly.
"We did not know it."

"Shall I bring it here?" queried Marion.

"No," said Edith. "I will go myself, but I cannot leave—"

"Oh, I will look after Mrs. Marsden," put in Marion.

"All right," answered Mrs. Warburton; "I will be back in a minute."

"I want to write a note," said Clara Beaufoy to Edith. "May I go with you?"

"And I want to smoke a cigarette," said Sir Reginald. "May I sit at the top of the steps?"

"Why, of course," said Edith, as she went into the house with Mrs. Beaufoy, and Ethel Marsden seated herself with Marion.

Faithorne gained the top of the steps and threw himself into a rocking chair. He had placed himself so that he could hear every word that Mrs. Marsden said, and watch the effect upon her auditor, whom he examined carefully from head to foot.

"A very nice family, this," said he to himself as he lighted his cigarette.

"I am so glad, Miss Wurmsley," began

Thello Marsden, "to have an opportunity of thanking you for your contribution to my last charity."

"Don't mention it, I beg," returned the child. "It is a real pleasure to assist any one so devoted to good works as you are."

"Well," replied Ethel thoughtfully, "this charity is at least deserving, I can vouch for it. A poor, young girl, an orphan—betrayed."

"Hullo!" said Faithorne to himself at the top of the steps. "What is *her* little game?"

"In fact, worse," continued Ethel, raising her liquid, purple eyes to Marion's. "Abandoned. I will not say by whom, though I know his name. It would not matter much, for he is in Russia, now."

"In Russia, did you say?" said Marion, leaning forward.

"Yes," replied Ethel, with apparent unconcern, as she narrowly watched the effect of her words. "He is in a very good position, and Denalguez could certainly have afforded —"

"Denalguez—" echoed Marion, rising.

"What, did I mention his name?" said Ethel with a tone of surprise. "I did not intend to, but it is quite in confidence; for the young girl is really of excellent family. You shall judge for yourself—"

"No, Mrs. Marsden," said Marion, growing deadly pale, "it is useless."

"Besides," continued Ethel, mercilessly, "it may be his intention to come back and marry her. We must not despair. Why, what is the matter? You are ill."

"No, nothing," said Marion, "only it is rather cold, with the water falling here—a sudden chill. Excuse me, I will be back directly," and she staggered rather than walked off in the direction of the shrubbery.

Sir Reginald Faithorne arose from his rocking-chair and throwing his cigarette into the fountain-basin to the unconcealed disgust of half a dozen gold-fish that rose eagerly to inspect it, he walked down the steps and planted himself before Mrs. Marsden.

"I will make a bet with you," said he.

"Oh! what about?"

"That there is not one word of truth in all that you have been saying."

"Indeed! what makes you think so?"

"Firstly, because you have said it. Anyhow, it is a fairly good invention to ruin Denalguetz in the estimation of his *fiancée*, but take care, if you ever give me cause, I will justify him."

"You threaten me?"

"No, I only warn you. One must always be fully armed where you are concerned."

"Oh!" Thello looked into her companion's eyes, as if to measure the full scope of his intentions; then she said, "Take me across the lawn. I want to see some more of this place."

Meanwhile Marion had reached the stables where she found her father waiting for her. "How dreadful," she had been repeating dully to herself. "How dreadful! I wonder why I should be so punished."

"Well, there you are at last," said Mr. Wurmsley. "You would not have kept me waiting so long if you had known what I wanted to say to you. Come here." He had seated himself upon a broad stone just inside the carriage gates, and now he drew her to him.

"You are not looking very cheerful," said he, glancing at her, "but we will see what difference my news makes to you. You know I received a letter from Captain Denalquez? —Well, well, don't you want to know what he says? He asks me to give you to him." The girl turned her head and furtively wiped away a tear.

"What?—silent?" said the old gentleman. "Yes, I suppose I shall have to lose you, for 'silence gives consent.' "

"You are mistaken," said Marion, in a broken voice. "Please reply that I refuse."

"What," said Mr. Wurmsey, "you refuse? But from his letter he seemed to feel confident of you. Am I to give him no reason?"

"None," said the girl, "only that I refuse. No one knows of this offer and you must promise me not to speak of it."

"Do you know he has come here for his answer? He was in the stables with me, and he is waiting in the wild-garden."

"I will not see him," said Marion hurriedly. "Promise not to let him find me. I do not wish it. You will tell him I do not wish to see him," and before her father could add another word she ran away, down the path by which she had come.

"What extraordinary creatures girls are," said the ex-merchant to himself as he disappeared in turn, in the direction which he had desired his daughter in vain to take. "I would have sworn she cared for him, but I suppose I must go and do the unpleasant thing, and make myself unpopular. Oh, how inconsiderate people are!—especially girls."

CHAPTER V.

MEANWHILE, Edith Warburton had walked into the house, at her sister's suggestion, saying as she went, "Ethel is right. I will take her advice. I *will* receive my friends, I will be my own mistress in my own house, and they *shall* stay to dinner. Once the plunge is taken, my husband will obey like the rest. I do not see why he should be unlike others. I see no reason why because he thinks himself better, he should be really worse." As she passed through her husband's study to gain the hall, she saw him sitting there, apparently waiting.

"What," she exclaimed, "you are back?"

"Yes, darling," answered Philip Warburton, gently. "I could not make up my mind to leave you, so I sent a message to that effect to the office. Business must do without me until to-morrow, for birthdays do not come so often. Will you put this deed away? There! Do you feel much taller, now that that you are a freeholder, a real-estate owner, you little goose?" and he drew his wife's head to him and kissed her.

"It is very good of you," said Edith nervously, "and does this place really belong to me? Is it my very own?"

"That deed," returned Warburton, "is the legal evidence of that astonishing fact." A knock at the door announced the presence of a servant.

"For how many shall dinner be laid?" said the latter as he obeyed the summons to "come in."

"For seven," answered Edith, nervously.

"For seven," echoed Warburton, with astonishment, as the servant left the room. "Why, I thought we were to have a family party, but I see—you are going to surprise me, and you have invited some friends."

"Yes," returned Edith, "some friends."

"And who are they?" said Philip. "Unless, of course, it is a secret. If it is, I promise you to be tremendously surprised when the time comes."

"Perhaps you will," said Edith nervously, as before.

"Why?"

"Why—"

"Well—"

"I don't know quite how to tell you, Philip, but honestly, I could not help it. They asked me to ask them."

"They—who?"

"Mrs. Marsden and Mrs. Beaufoy, and a friend of theirs."

"You are not serious," said Warburton, looking her squarely in the face, "you do not mean it?"

"Yes, I do," said Edith, "I have invited them, and there's an end of it." She walked to the window. "Thank heaven that's over," she said to herself.

"Edith," said Philip Warburton, gravely, "you did not mean to defy me surely? Say that you forgot what I asked you, say so, only say so—"

"No," said Edith, "I cannot say so. Your command was as unjust as it was unjustifiable, and it would only be humiliating to myself to send away my best friends in such a manner."

"Your best friends," echoed Philip Warburton scornfully. "Nothing hurts me so much as to hear you give them such a title. I pray that you may some day learn who really *is* your *best* friend."

"I don't want to learn," interrupted Edith, excitedly. "I know that my best friends are those who seek to lighten my bondage, and I have a right to defend them against their calumniators."

"Good God!"

"And to prefer them," continued Edith,

"to people who are always annoying and tyrannizing over me. Do you wonder?"

"No," replied her husband bitterly. "I have ceased to be surprised at anything. I do not see why I should be surprised at such ingratitude. I was wrong to let you see how you wound me."

"Reproaches! Have I not done my duty?"

"Great heaven," said Warburton to the empty air, "I speak to her of love, and she answers me of duty."

"What more do you expect?" asked his wife, turning to him. "It is not my fault, if I have no more to give."

"Nothing then," said Warburton, rising. "From now, duty is all that I will ask from you. Let us see how well you fulfil it. Your first step on the new path you have chosen is to obey me. Mind you do not stumble at the start."

"Oh," said Edith. "Then this is to be the beginning of the reign of terror?"

"If you will have it so," said Warburton, with a bitter laugh.

Edith reached the door. "Woe be to him," said she, as she left the room, "that attempts such a government over me."

"Poor child," said her husband, looking after her. "May you not bring woe to yourself by your rebellion?"

As he spoke a servant reentered, announcing a visitor.

"What!" exclaimed Warburton, as he rose to meet the new-comer, "Denalguez? I did not expect to see you for some time. What brought you here so soon?"

"Oh, the usual cause," said Denalguez, shaking the proffered hand, "a woman," and he dropped wearily into a chair.

Maurice Denalguez was a Spaniard and a soldier. He looked the latter, but not the former. Tall and heavily, though lithely built, he might have served as the beau ideal of a woman's dream. His hair, which was of a rich brown, curled lightly all over his head, and was parted on the wrong side. His eyes varied in color as he spoke of varied subjects, and were alternately of a deep gray, and of a steel blue. The moustache, whose ends were loosely combed out, overshadowed the mouth, which, in speaking, seemed almost too finely curved for a man's, but which in repose became thin and hard-set. A strong jaw gave indication of his strength of will, and a nervous habit that he had of playing with one end of his moustache drew the attention irresistibly to the tremendous physical power shown by his muscular white hand.

"A woman!" echoed Philip Warburton, as he seated himself opposite his unexpected

guest. "Well, whatever the cause, I hope you will stay with us now. Is it true that you leave the diplomatic service? Why, I read only to-day of your promotion to St. Petersburg."

"Quite true," answered Denalguez, "but I sent my resignation not half an hour since. I resigned for a very different reason than that which brought me here. I sought neither the honor nor the emolument for myself, and now I have no further use for either."

"Well," said Warburton, cheerfully, "you have fortune enough, if not wealth, to be independent. I wrote you some time since, that the money you left with me for investment has considerably accumulated."

"Ah," said Denalguez, bitterly, "the proverb is right once more. 'Unlucky in love' —you know the rest. You can do what you like with the money. I take no further interest in it now."

"But suppose you should marry," said Warburton, growing more and more astonished at this, to him, new phase of his friend's character.

"God forbid," interrupted the latter. "I know the sex too well. Do not be surprised at my bitterness, I have been singularly unfortunate, as you will allow. It was a woman who denounced my father in the political

crisis that caused our banishment from Spain. My first love was fatal. The woman at whose feet I poured out my wealth of youth and hope was the cause of my challenging my earliest friend, and as his life flowed out with the blood I had shed, I learned that she had betrayed—deceived me—and that I was a murderer, where I had thought to be a chivalrous defender. To most men, woman is a fate, but to my race, woman has always been a fatality. My brother, Prosper, poor boy, might have been alive to-day but for that fatality. Can I ever forget that his bright, young life was ruined, his honor involved, and only redeemed by his early death? I came back from my long exile in South America, full of plans and projects for the boy's future. I left him a child, but I found him—" and he paused before he continued, "the slave of a woman's caprice, bewitched by a fiend into the dishonor he was too blind to see. I tried to save him—I but hastened the end. I pointed out to him the treason. The woman was married—not an uncommon case, you will say—I would have saved him the inevitable remorse, but he believed she cared for him. I had not been in Paris twenty-four hours before I knew that she did not. It is so easy to deceive a boy of twenty."

"And you proved the deceit to him?" said

Philip Warburton, who had forgotten all his own trouble in his sympathy with his friend's despair.

"Conclusively," replied the other. "God knows if I did right; at least I thought so. I shall never forget that look of pain that his face wore, when, with a few bitter truths I shattered his faith. But the world's like that, Warburton. How often do we lavish the best blossoms of our heart's garden on creatures who crush the very essence of our manhood, and do it by means of that innate cruelty which the world has called by courtesy, 'coquetry.'"

"Was she really fond of him in her way?" queried Warburton, "for I take it he was not rich enough to be of much use to her."

"You are mistaken," returned Denalguez. "He inherited a small fortune from his mother, the greater part of which she designed to possess in the shape of a set of diamonds just ordered at a fabulous price. The discovery following my arrival robbed her of the gift. She did not care for the boy, but his reckless generosity made life easier to her. She will never forget my share in despoiling her. We have never met face to face, but I feel that we shall meet some day, and mark me, Warburton, the debt between us will be heavy of settlement."

"I should like to know," said his friend gently, "if you can tell me without distressing yourself, how he took his life?"

Denalguez was sitting, his hands clasped between his knees, staring out into the garden which separated the house from the road. He continued without a change of tone,

"I went to his room, armed with proofs which he could not doubt. He listened in silence to what I had to say, his eyes fixed all the time upon a picture of the woman. I asked his promise to leave Paris and break the chain which was dragging him down. For some moments we were both silent; I waiting and hoping for the promise that should begin a new life, he still looking at that woman's face as though he would ask mercy of it—his head resting on his hands. It was a solemn silence, old friend. And I felt he was choosing his course. The young face was so sad that even my eyes became dimmed for a moment. A rapid movement, a sharp report, and he fell at my feet—dead! *He had chosen.*"

For a few moments a profound stillness ensued between the men; Denalguez strung up to a pitch of nervous tension by the effort of recital; Warburton horror-struck at the recital itself. It was he who finally broke the silence.

"And the woman lives, I suppose," he said, "and has, I suppose, forgotten. Who was she?"

"He left a letter," replied Denalguez, "begging me to hide her name. I have respected his wish, and no one but she and I know that the cause of the tragedy was—Ethel Marsden."

Warburton had sprung to his feet, and stood looking at his companion as if a thunderbolt had fallen between them.

"You can form no idea of this woman's evil nature," continued Denalguez. "What do you suppose is her fixed resolve?"

"I cannot imagine."

"Why, to subjugate *me*, as she did my poor brother. Well," continued he, rising and pacing up and down the room, "she will have her opportunity. I have determined to humiliate her as never before was woman humiliated in this world."

"She is too clever to give you a chance," said Warburton. "Your name alone would be enough to warn her."

Denalguez laughed. "Do you suppose," said he, "that I am not prepared for that? My plan is quite clear. I make my first attack at once. To-day, probably, if not, immediately on my return. I have a letter which gives me an excellent excuse for calling

on her and it is as Count Guerravillia I shall present myself."

"True," said Warburton, as a new light seemed to break upon him. "I had almost forgotten that that was your name."

"No wonder," returned the other, "for I never used the title. After the insurrection in which my father was implicated, our property was confiscated, and from his arrival in England we bore our name only. That is foreign enough in all conscience. In this case, however, my ancestral honors stand me in good stead, and I believe I shall succeed. It is a case of 'diamond cut diamond.' She sought to entrap me, she will entrap herself. Oh, these women—these women," concluded the man, as he laughed a mirthless, cynical laugh, and turned to the window.

"My dear fellow," said Warburton, following him and laying his hand upon his shoulder, "your only trouble is that you have chosen badly. All you have now is to—"

"Wait a moment and hear the end. Having hardened myself against the whole world, I found a young girl, pure as an angel, honest as—you, promising me nothing, yet promising me all. At last I had found an exception. She belonged to a new sex, called 'Truth.' I believed in her, as I believe in you."

"And you were deceived?"

"I might have expected it. I loved her too well. I accepted my Russian appointment in order that I might gain for her both fortune and position. I had succeeded. I wrote, proposing to her father for her hand; the reply was merely that she refused me, that she could not love me. I do not blame her, mark you, for refusing me, but for having made me believe—and believe most honestly—that she cared for me."

"Well, my dear old man," said Warburton, in a tone of one about to change the subject. "After all it is possible that matters might have been worse. She might have accepted you first and deceived you afterwards."

"There, there," said Denalguez, "don't let us speak of it any more. To pleasanter things. Your happiness, for instance, for I presume you are happy as the day is long."

"Remember," said Warburton with a gravity such that his friend could not quite decide it to be real or assumed, "I have been married for three years."

"That sounds like a pretty definite 'no,'" said Denalguez, his bitter smile showing his strong teeth again underneath the now twisted up moustache.

"You are mistaken," returned Warburton. "I am happy enough. That is to say, I am as happy as I can be."

"I do not believe you."

"Well, that's pretty strong, when I say—"

"Philip, something is wrong," returned his friend. "You are not as frank as I."

"What can you expect," said Warburton, speaking rapidly. "The probe will hurt the wound, even when a friend's hand guides it. You have guessed well—I *am* unhappy. I have chosen for my wife—well there! don't let us refer to it."

"That *you* should have chosen such a woman," said Denalquez, as if to himself.

"Oh," said Warburton, speaking in a tone as cynical as that of his friend had been, "she is of the majority. I forget you have been away so long. Since your departure there is a new tribe existent; one of the lost ten, perhaps, though its origin is English. My wife, with numberless others, belongs to it. They have institutions of their own, as have other communities, clubs, sports, and the rest of it. But the chief sport, the great event, is 'The Married Woman's Hunt Cup.' All members of the tribe can enter for this race. All jockeys, gentlemen or professionals, are eligible, except the husband. The Cup is quite pretty and unique,—it is beaten out of the husband's golden hopes and bright anticipations, with Misery in strong relief, and it is filled with the cries of despair his heart's rend-

ing gives forth, though his lips be mute. The tribe is called 'Professional Beauties.' There was a time—which is how ancient history—when motherhood and womanhood existed, when the beauty of the wife was the glory and warmth of her husband's life, but, God help us! we are in an age of progression and obsolete customs must give way to improvements."

As he finished speaking, he fell into the chair that he had lately vacated, and Denalquez rose.

"Things are worse than I expected," said he as he took up his position in front of his friend.

"You know her," returned Warburton. "We often visited her father's house together before you left. Mr. Wurmsley, you know."

"Wurmsley," said Denalquez, controlling himself with an effort. "Yes, I remember."

"You frequently spoke of her beauty," continued Warburton, "and of her sister's. Do you remember her too—Marion?"

"Marion," echoed Denalquez, with a stronger effort. "Oh, yes. I think I remember."

"Edith was so lovely," continued Philip Warburton, not noticing his friend's agitation. "I could not bear to think what might be her

fate. Her father is a strange old gentleman, always absorbed in some hobby or other ; good sort of fellow in his way, but utterly unfit for the care of such a girl. It has been a long fight, and I have suffered a little, but now I have forbidden one or two women the house, women who were her most dangerous companions, and I hope peace will be restored."

"And happiness?" said Denalguez.

"That is out of the question. Of course it is my fault, at least I suppose it is, but the spell is broken. I see Edith as she is, and it seems to me my love is dead. Don't let us say anything more about it. Egad, how mournful we are! I positively insist upon changing the subject. You have come to stay with us, of course."

"Not now, thanks," answered Denalguez. "I am only in London for a few hours on my way to Madrid ; but I shall be back in three or four weeks, when I shall be a comparatively idle man, and then my first visit will be to Mrs. Marsden."

"You have really decided to leave the service?" said Warburton.

"Positively. I shall return only to settle my affairs. I must go now. Make my excuses to Mrs. Warburton, and say I shall hope to meet her on my return."

The two men walked together to the front gate, where the hansom which had brought Denalguez was waiting to take him back. With a final hand-clasp to his friend, he sprang into it, and was driven away.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Edith Warburton left her husband, she sought once more the garden. "I wish they had not come," she said to herself. "But what can I do? I cannot be made the subject of Clare Beaufoy's stories to every man in town for the next month; and though I do not think that Sir Reginald Faithorne is the kind of man to talk about me in the clubs if the friendship he professes for me is genuine, it will be very unpleasant for him to be brought into the affair. Well, I suppose I must let things shape themselves as they will. Sir Reginald seems to be a man of the world. If I can find him alone, I will get him to help me out. He shall have an opportunity of proving the nature of his friendship."

She stepped out on to the verandah, outside the drawing-room windows, and the first person that she found was the fascinating baronet, himself.

"Ah, at last," said this latter gentleman, as he arose. "I had lost everybody, but, thank heaven, I have found everybody again."

"Oh, Sir Reginald," began Edith, not heeding his words. "I want you to help me."

"Willingly," broke in the baronet, "what can I do?"

"Please go at once."

"What?"

"Yes, yes. Make an excuse, and take the others away."

"But why?"

"My husband has returned, and has been making a fearful scene. It must seem strange, but I beg you will excuse my apparent rudeness; I will explain it all another time."

"Ah!" said the baronet to himself. "There will be *another time*. I wonder when?"

"If you were to meet him now," continued Edith, "I am sure it would be most unpleasant for all of us; so please go, for my sake."

"Believe me," said Sir Reginald, "I would do anything in the world for you, but my obedience will cost me the delight of your presence. Besides, to tell me that you are alone, comparatively defenceless, is hardly the thing to make me run away. I want to tell you so much—it is very cruel of you, and very unhospitable, too. Must I go?"

"Yes, you must," said Edith, nervously, "and I can never see you again."

"At your own house," said Sir Reginald,

"I can quite understand that that might be the case, but at your friend's, at Mrs. Marsden's?"

"Oh, I am half dead with fear!"

"One word of hope, and I will go. If not, I stay."

"Go, go, I entreat you."

"Well, if it will please you, say *au revoir*, and I am off.

"*Au revoir*," said she nervously. Sir Reginald bowed over the hand which she extended to him, and passed through the house. Edith's heart gave a throb of relief as she heard the door close behind him, and she sank wearily into the chair which he had just vacated. At this moment, Clare Beaufoy and Ethel Marsden appeared by the opposite path to that by which they had effected their retreat.

"Why," said the former, as Edith descended the steps to meet them, "why, we are just where we started. Your grounds are charming, Mrs. Warburton, your shrubbery is the most discreet piece of landscape gardening I ever saw, and your wild-garden is positively paradise. One can lose one's self as if in a labyrinth. Indeed, I congratulate you on your birthday present, after having thoroughly examined it. It is almost worth while to keep a husband when he makes one such royal gifts."

This was by no means what Thello wanted, so she nudged her friend with her heel as she continued carelessly the sentence which Clare Beaufoy had begun.

"So he gave you this place for a birthday present, did he? Well, why shouldn't he, he is rich enough in all conscience. It is a fairy bower in every sense of the term, dragon included. I am glad we did not encounter the dragon, however. The dragon is in the city, I suppose?"

Philip Warburton, after seeing Denalquez off, had come through the house and stood at the top of the steps, as Mrs. Marsden finished her sentence, and his clear, incisive tones cut in upon her eloquence, as he said gently,

"No, Madame, he is not in the city."

"Good heavens," said Thello, turning her adorable grin on the lord of Wimbledon Lodge as he descended the steps. "You were there, were you? Nothing is so disagreeable as to be overheard, excepting, perhaps what one overhears. However, you will forgive my little pleasantry."

Philip Warburton stood at the bottom of the steps looking at her, an expression of unconcealed dislike upon his sharply cut face.

"I have given myself the pleasure," answered he, "of ordering your carriage, Mrs. Marsden, as, I regret to say, my wife's

arrangements are such that she cannot give herself the pleasure of entertaining you at dinner to-day."

Edith had stepped to his side as he spoke.

"Take care," said she in an undertone.
"If I am not mistress in my own house I will be nothing else. My friends will dine *here*."

"They will *not*," said Philip in the same tone.

"They *shall*."

"They shall *not*. Am I to speak plainer?"

"As you please," answered Edith. Then raising her voice she continued: "You can keep your house, and everything else. My friends, this house is my husband's gift to me, and this parchment is the transfer of title which he had put into my hands immediately before I joined you here. The transfer of title to a house where I may not ask my friends to dine! Do you suppose," continued she, turning to her husband, "that I am to be deceived by such a shadow? So much for your gift," and she flung the parchment into the basin of the cascade.

This time the gold-fish did not rise to investigate the disturbance, naturally mistrustful of so voluminous an offering. Of the four people present, Thello Marsden alone retained her presence of mind.

"I am so sorry," said she to Philip, "that

you are unwell, and on your wife's birthday, too, of all days; but I trust that when we meet again you will be entirely recovered. Good-by," and she held out her hand until Philip had to take it mechanically, and calling Clare Beaufoy to follow her, she disappeared.

Philip Warburton escorted them to the door, and his wife was left alone.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was some time later that afternoon when Sir Reginald Faithorne called again at the house in Hans Place. To the servant who opened the door, he had given his card, and was saying :

“Tell Mrs. Marsden that I propose to call upon her to-morrow, and say I shall be much obliged if she will write me a note to say whether it will be convenient, when she comes in this afternoon.”

“Mrs. Marsden is at home, sir,” said the servant as the baronet was turning away.

“At home?”

“Yes, sir. Mrs. Marsden returned about half an hour ago.”

“Then show me upstairs,” said Sir Reginald.

“Great Scott! Thello,” was his ejaculation as he entered the room. “Of all the extraordinary people I ever came across, you are, of course, the most extraordinary, but what in the world is the meaning of this?”

“The meaning of what?” returned Thello.

“Why, the meaning of your being in town, when I left you at Wimbledon?”

"*Mon cher*, I might as well ask you the same question, seeing that I left you at the same place."

"Pardon me," returned Faithorne, "my fall came before yours. I had the start of you in being turned out of paradise, I should think, by a good half hour. You *were* turned out, weren't you?"

"Yes," replied Thello, "Clare and I were turned out in the calmest manner imaginable by that brutal idiot, Philip Warburton. He don't think that we are good enough to associate with his dunce of a wife. However, I will make him sorry for himself, if ever man was sorry in this world. When do you want to see her again?"

"My dear Thello, you go so fast—" began Sir Reginald.

"I have never been given to understand," interrupted Thello, "that Sir Rex Faithorne went particularly slow. I presume you are not going to stand there, with an ingenuous smile upon your countenance, and tell me that you made no progress with that little school-girl, with all the opportunities you had of being alone with her?"

"On the contrary," replied Faithorne, "I made such good progress that we became friends and allies at once, and the first service that she claimed of my friendship, was that I

should go away—a rather rough ‘first service’ for an ardent admirer.”

“Never mind, poor old man,” returned Thello. “You shall be avenged. She will be very sorry for herself, and shall tell you so. When do you care to meet her for the purpose? Will to-morrow suit you?”

“Certainly,” replied Faithorne.

“She will be in town, and she will lunch with me.”

Faithorne took his hat, and with it his leave. Left by herself, Thello paced once or twice up and down her boudoir, and then coming to a full stop before the empty fireplace, she remarked to her reflection in the glass,

“So, my beautiful Edith, you allow your idiotic husband to humiliate me before Clare Beaufoy. All right, my beautiful, proud, prim, proper, punctilious and prudish young person! Since you are so fond of this husband of yours, you may as well be, yourself, the instrument of my revenge.”

She forthwith sat down, and indited the following note :

“*My Poor Darling Edith:*

“My heart bled for you yesterday when I saw you so grossly maltreated by that husband of yours; but though I am prepared to admit him the soul of chivalry that you declare him to be, he

did, perhaps, forget himself a little this time. Please rest assured that I quite understand the condition of affairs, and am not in the least angry at the cavalier way in which we were turned out. I have also represented the whole affair to Clare Beaufoy in such a way that she will not talk about it.

"Come up to do some shopping to-morrow afternoon. I want your assistance, so lunch with me here at two o'clock. Remember above all things that I am always your loving and sympathetic friend, **THELLO.**"

"Confound her!" she added to herself, as she sealed up the letter with a vicious thump that made the knick-knacks on her writing table rattle.

True to her promise to Sir Reginald Faithorne, Thello Marsden had, next day, the pleasure of entertaining Mrs. Philip Warburton at lunch. To the events of the preceding day, she referred but little, electing to treat the whole matter as a colossal joke, and when Edith tried to turn the subject in that direction, she would waive it aside with a little merry laugh, a few words of condolence with her friend on the possession of such a husband as Philip Warburton, and a phrase or two of simple eulogy on the way in which Sir Reginald had got them all out of an unpleasant predicament by making good his retreat at the critical moment.

When they came up from luncheon, a little shriek of surprise burst from Thello's lips.

"Why, I do declare," exclaimed she with a merry laugh, "here is our *preux chevalier*, himself. You could not have arrived more opportunely, Sir Reginald," said she, "though where you come from, heaven only knows. I thought you were out of town. Here is Mrs. Warburton, positively *dying* to express the relief she felt when you made good your retreat yesterday."

"Indeed, Sir Reginald," began Edith, "I hardly know how to apologize—"

"I beg that you will not say a word about it," interrupted Sir Reginald; "so far as I was concerned, the matter is of the supremest unimportance. I only went down to Wimble-don to have the honor of making your acquaintance, and since I succeeded in that object, it mattered not how soon or how abruptly our first interview terminated. I can only congratulate myself that fate has so befriended me as to bring about our second so soon."

"There, there, don't talk any more about it. But you, Sir Rex, be good enough to make yourself useful."

"Why, of course," answered the gentleman addressed. "I shall be charmed, but how?"

"Entertain Mrs. Warburton for half an hour whilst I dress. We are going out shopping, she and I."

"Can I not come and help you?" said Edith nervously.

"Not for the world," returned Thello. "I always dress myself and it makes me positively miserable to have anybody else in the room whilst I perform the mysteries of the comb and powder-puff. *Au revoir,*" and Thello disappeared.

An hour later, she came down, dressed for the drive, and found Sir Reginald and Edith discussing Swiss scenery—at least Sir Reginald was.

It did not escape Thello's observation that during their drive that afternoon, Edith Warburton was singularly silent.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN hiatus of six months occurs at this point in the tale I am unfolding, during which the names of Sir Reginald Faithorne and "the new beauty," Mrs. Philip Warburton, were invariably coupled together in the *chronique scandaleuse* of the modern Babylon. It seemed to Edith that she could go nowhere without meeting Sir Reginald Faithorne, and it struck her as odd, as she did not realize that Faithorne having made her the fashion, contrived that it should not be otherwise.

The curtain rises on the drama at the end of this period, and discloses the same scene upon which it fell, namely, the boudoir-drawing-room of Thello Marsden. Thello is sitting in an arm-chair before the open window, and Sir Reginald has just entered the room unannounced. There was always a great deal to engross the observation of a philosopher in the greeting of Thello and her companion. There was such a complete lack of ceremony or cordiality in the process that the most casual observer would have realized that the partnership between these two promising

specimens of humanity was essentially of an offensive and defensive nature.

"Well," was the first word spoken by Faithorne.

"I expect Edith every minute," answered Thello. "I told her you would be here, and I made her promise to come. I think that I play propriety in a most exemplary manner, don't I? Though, upon my word, you ought to have been able to dispense with me by this time. It is perfectly outrageous! Here are you, the most worldly man of the world of your day, dangling after a vain, silly woman for six months, and still needing a chaperone; doesn't it occur to you that you are paying for a dog and doing the barking yourself?"

"I am, you are, it does," replied Sir Reginald, answering all her observations in a lump. "But I am free to confess that I am getting bored to death with the beautiful Edith. She is, without exception, the heaviest woman I ever met, and I get simply worn out, being kept at high pressure from week's end to week's end. You see, she has started with thoroughly bad training, and I do not feel like wasting any more time on her instruction. In other words, she has been playing the fool with me as long as I feel inclined to stand it, and I propose to say 'good-morning' before she says 'good-morning' to me.

By the way, Thello, I fancy—unless I am mistaken, I think you said I could be of some service to you. How much this time?"

Thello replied with her light, grinning laugh, the laugh which showed all her teeth and the tip of her tongue. "What a nuisance I am," said she, "but I have overrun my account again. I wish you would just attend to this for me until next month," and she handed him a folded blue paper.

"Hum," ejaculated Sir Reginald, as he looked over the bill. "Thornhill ought to pay *you*, instead of asking you to pay *him*. Dear me!—cigar-case, cigar-case, scarf-ring, scarf-pin, cigarette-case, match-box, match-box, match-box, cigarette-case; dear, generous, little woman. Which regiment is it?"

"You abominable tease," said Thello, laughing as she snatched the bill out of his hand. "I do wish you would look after it, and not chaff about it, for I shall have the man dunning me again."

"I am sure I shall be most charmed," said Faithorne; "I shall be passing this afternoon, and I will look in." Then as an afterthought seemed to strike him, he said, "Oh, I find on reflection that I have to go in the other direction. Would it be bothering you awfully if I asked you, as you are going down Bond Street, to look into Thornhill's and pay

a bill for me? It won't take you a moment," and drawing his letter case from his pocket, he took thereout the bill he had just received, together with a bundle of notes, several of which returned with the bill to its original owner.

"Thank heaven," said Thello to herself, "he has got tired of Edith. There certainly never was a man who did these things so prettily before." Then she added aloud, "I hear the door-bell, and I expect that that is Edith. If you are going to have a row I will wait until it is over," and Thello left the room.

"If," said Faithorne to himself, as he strolled out of the little drawing-room into the smaller apartment beyond, "the fair Edith thinks she can go on playing me like this, she is vastly mistaken." He walked to the mantel-piece and adjusted his cravat in the glass.

Meanwhile, Edith had entered the drawing-room, and looking around gave a little stamp of impatience at finding the room empty. "This must end," she said to herself. "I am perfectly wretched, and if something doesn't happen, I shall go mad. Oh, there you are," continued she aloud, as Faithorne entered through the *portières*, "it is very nice of you to keep me waiting, after all the risk I run to get here at all."

"Risk?" answered Faithorne, "rubbish! How can you run any risk here at Thello's? Besides, I have not seen you for more than a week."

"So much less excuse for being late," said Edith snappishly.

"I have been driving this morning," said Faithorne calmly. "The horses went very well, but I do not think Cora is quite fit."

"Who is Cora?"

"My new mare. I gave an awful price for her—a wonderful animal—"

"Bother the mare," exclaimed Edith, rising. "Do you know you nearly kept me waiting?"

"Nearly," echoed Faithorne. "You delightful autocrat! You seem like a small Catherine of Russia. You have some of her characteristics."

"What do you mean?"

"Last night at the opera, Lord What's-his-name, and the Austrian chap, were in your box all the evening. Their attention was perfectly obvious, but the most amusing thing was your trying to make each believe that he was the most favored."

"Oh you do me the honor to watch me?" said Edith with an ironical expression.

"Accident — pure accident," returned Faithorne coolly.

"Who were you with?"

"Alone, of course. Now look here, Edith, let us understand one another. I am not at all satisfied with your manner."

"What do you mean? By what right—"

"The right you give me," said Faithorne rising.

"You have none," broke in the woman.

"Really," continued he, imperturbably, "I think it is best we should come to an understanding. I have remarked your coolness and reproaches for some time, and I can see that you are tired of me. I don't blame you—oh, no. It is your nature. I am constant and faithful, great faults with you, because the sameness wearies you. It is a great misfortune, but I am resigned. One must bear despair and abandonment, but what I never *will* bear is ridicule."

"Sir Reginald, you are insolent."

"You see I am not your husband. In such cases the husband cannot help himself; it is a fatality that he has to submit to. It is his mission in life, but for—the other—it is a gratuitous affront which he is not obliged to submit to—by law. And I tell you frankly, that if you were to take your noble lord or your Austrian diplomat into high favor at your court, I would blow out the brains of either of them without the slightest compunction."

Edith clapped her hands to her ears.
“This is horrible!” she said. “And to think
that it is for this that I have jeopardized
everything.”

“To avoid being thought ridiculous, that
is all.”

“Oh, I see clearly enough,” said Edith,
desperately, “that you have desired this
break—”

“No, upon my honor, you never appeared
more lovely than you do now. Every one is
talking about you, and I never worshipped
you more.”

“Because it flatters you,” broke in Edith.
“Thank you. I don’t want that sort of love.
Oh! what miserable spirit of coquetry induced
me to accept attentions from you which may
have compromised my whole life? I thought
that I was harshly treated by my husband,
and you all fostered that belief. Where I
sought consolation, I find only insolent van-
ity. Why did you varnish your reality so
thickly that all was invisible beneath the sur-
face? Look at me, look at me, Rex—a great
victory, truly, but one that will scarcely repay
you. You have been good enough to show
me the means of retreat, and I thank you.”

“What do you mean?”

“You asked me to be frank, you ought to
understand.”

"You love me no longer?"

"I render to you no account. You wished to be warned, take the warning now."

"My dear Edith," began he—at this moment Ethel Marsden came in from the inner room.

"Heavens! what a disturbance," said she.

"He is making a dreadful scene," said Edith hysterically.

"A quarrel?" queried Ethel. "Well, it will be all the sweeter to make peace."

"It is useless," said Edith, "it is all over."

"Very well," said Sir Reginald, "but give me your reason."

"Reason, indeed! There is no lack of reasons. Your vanity, your rudeness, your faults—"

"Faults," interrupted Faithorne, sarcastically. "That is nothing new. I always had them, and I never hid them."

"Besides—your heartlessness," continued Edith; "there is your utter want of feeling. The day before yesterday, for instance, when I was walking with you, you dared to bow to a—a—person."

"Very slightly!" interrupted Faithorne with humorous rapidity, "very slightly, I am sure!"

Thello Marsden stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth to prevent herself shrieking with laughter.

"I saw the same—person—come out of the Albany once—"

"She was teaching me a polonaise," said Faithorne, gravely; "she is a dancer, and a capital teacher. Let me recommend her to you. For goodness' sake don't pretend to be jealous. You know that my fidelity has always been unimpeachable."

"Well, I release you from any further fidelity," said Edith. "I only beg that you will send me back my letters and my portrait."

"You see," said Faithorne to Ethel, "you hear—"

"Well, I see," began Ethel.

"This is premeditated," continued Faithorne. "It is a cold-blooded way of getting rid of me. My servant shall bring you your letters at once, here; as for the portrait, which never leaves me, I did not think you would ask me for that, and I cannot bear to part with it. But here it is—take it," and he took a case from his pocket and handed it to Edith.

"At last," she exclaimed, opening the case. "Oh!" and she let it drop as she covered her face with her hands.

"What?" said Faithorne, as he stooped and picked it up. "Is it possible? Dear me! I took the wrong one this morning. It

is a dreadful thing, but one does get mixed sometimes."

"And your fidelity!" said Edith through her fingers.

"Anticipated yours, that is all," said Faithorne. "You see we are so—sympathetic. You don't want this?" continued he, pointing to the portrait. "She is very popular just now. Well, if you won't have it, I will keep it, and I promise to send you yours here at once, and your letters. I will take care that there is no mistake this time. Adieu. I will come in this evening, if I may, Thello?"

"Certainly, delighted," returned his hostess, and Faithorne bowed and left the room.

"That is a charming fellow," said Thello, as the door closed behind him, "and you are very stupid to be so hard on him."

"I have my reasons," began Edith.

"Well, I don't know," interrupted Thello, "but I fancy I can guess."

"For some time," continued Edith, not noticing the interruption, "he has assumed an air of proprietorship which irritates me beyond measure, and which would end by ruining me. And now, more than ever I must be careful. My husband's friend, Captain Denalguez, arrived yesterday from Madrid."

"Denalguez," echoed Ethel, with an appearance of intense interest. "What is he

like? I have heard so much about him that I am curious to see what sort of a man he is."

"Hideous," said Edith.

"I supposed he was handsome."

"He may be so; I believe, in fact, he is well favored enough, but to me he is horrible. He brings a shadow—a presentiment of evil. There is something about him that I abhor. It is indescribable, but it is too strong to overcome."

A servant entered the room at the moment.
"Mrs. Warburton's maid is below," said she,
"and would like to speak to her."

"Shall she come in?" said Thello.

"No, I will go and see her," answered Edith as she left the room.

"When Mrs. Beaufoy comes," said Ethel Marsden to the servant, "show her straight in here." She seated herself at the writing table and scribbled a note which she sealed up. "Send this letter at once to its address," said she to the servant, who left the room as Edith reentered it.

"Anything important?"

"I am afraid so," said Edith, who was pale as death. "Marion came to the house just after I left. She seemed greatly excited. Philip went out with her, and they drove to father's."

"Well," said Ethel, "what of it?"

"Why," said Edith, "I said I was going to father's when I came here. What am I to do?"

"Can't you think of any one," said Ethel, "who would 'father' your little misrepresentation? Some old friend, surely."

"My old friend, Mrs. Satterthwaite might, if I—"

"Sit down there and write," interrupted Thello, promptly.

"What am I to say?"

"Sit down. Write this: If you should see my father or my husband before seeing me, do not forget that I came to your house today and was taken dreadfully ill. I send you my muff to send to me to-morrow by your maid, who is to go for news of my health. Don't fail. Sign and date it. Now do you understand? When you get home, be awfully ill; I will answer for the rest."

At this moment the servant reappeared.
"A gentleman wishes to see you, ma'am," said he.

"I am out," said Ethel. She signed to the servant to go, and he laid a card on the table.
"By the by, who is it?" added she in an uninterested tone.

"A strange gentleman," replied the man, who says he is in London for a day only, and

that he brings Madame letters from Prince Zourokoff."

Ethel thought for a moment. "Let the gentleman wait, I will receive him." The servant went out.

"The only thing that worries me now," said Edith, "is the letters and the picture that Reginald has, which he is to send here."

"It is your own fault," said Ethel, "I have told you fifty times never to write a line."

"I wish," said Edith bitterly, "that you had never told me a great many things."

"What do you mean?"

"Why," returned Edith, who was on the point of bursting into tears, "I mean that I should never have been in this trouble but for you." She did not observe the fact, but the adorable Thello was on the point of losing her temper.

"In what way am I responsible?" said she dryly.

"I do not say that you are altogether responsible," said Edith, not noticing her tone, "but you sneered at what you called my 'pastoral life,' till you made me feel that I was a martyr. What a fool I have been!"

"Yes, my dear," said Ethel, complacently, "what a fool you have been! And a fool you seem likely to be. But do not comfort yourself with the thought that I led you from

the domestic hearth. If you had not wanted to go, you would not have gone."

"But you are older than I am, and might have prevented me."

"Older, well—I am. Prevented you, indeed! I am not your nurse, and though I am *older* than you, I wager that you will be old enough to make your youth an excuse for your inclination."

Edith saw that she had gone too far. "Perhaps I spoke hastily just now," said she. "Forgive me."

"You had better not lose any time getting home," said Mrs. Marsden, dryly.

"I *must* wait for those letters," answered Edith. "I shall not feel safe until they are burned. He said he would send them at once."

"As you please," returned Ethel. "But I think you had better go now, and, if you can, come back for the letters later. I will leave them in this pigeon hole of my writing-table, so that if I am out, you can take them."

"You are right," said Edith, "I will go at once. I say, don't forget to send my muff and my letter to Mrs. Satterthwaite."

"Oh, all right," said Mrs. Marsden, and Edith started for the door, meeting Clare Beaufoy as she came in.

"What, are you going away?" said the new-comer to Edith.

"Yes." Then turning to Ethel she said, "Don't forget," and left the room.

"Great goodness!" said the lively Clare, dropping into a seat. "What is the matter with Edith?"

"Oh," replied Ethel, "she is overpowered with her own innocence!"

"What are you talking about?"

"I mean it literally. She says I have led her from the bosom of her family. What do you think of her?"

"Why, what I have often told you. Give me a rogue before a fool, any day. I knew Edith was just the kind of woman to go her own way and then blame her friends for helping her along. I made up my mind long ago to give her no chance of annoying me, and you see if you do not get the worst of it in the end."

"We shall see. Do you suppose I shall let *her* get the best of *me*? Oh, no! You do not know your little Ethel."

"It is no question of getting the best of it," returned Clare, hunting for a cigarette among the bric-à-brac on the little table. "She will always play the 'innocent lamb' led away by wicked companions, and let you in for the unpleasant thing at last. I had enough of it at

that birthday party, when she let her husband turn us out—perhaps you forget?"

"Forget?" echoed Ethel. "Not exactly. I have worked steadily from that day with one object. Warburton shall suffer for my humiliation. It has taken what seems to me a long time, but my turn is near at hand." She turned as she spoke and looked at Clare Beaufoy, an incarnation of malignant fury as she stood thus.

A servant entered with a packet of letters. "A messenger from Sir Reginald Faithorne," said he, "has left this packet for you, ma'am," and he left the room. Ethel looked at it, her purple eyes sparkling. "Ah, ah! Philip Warburton," said she, "here is my dagger. It is composed of these innocent looking little bits of paper, but it will wound you as deeply as I wish."

"What are they?" said Clare, blowing a blue cloud into the air.

"Listen," said Ethel, as she opened the packet, and after a moment's hesitation broke the seal of a letter that lay on the top addressed to Mrs. Philip Warburton. "'I return your letters, but I keep your peace of mind. Reginald Faithorne.' Now for Edith's," added she as she opened the inner packet.

"Oh, Thello!" said Clare. "You ought not to have opened it. Edith will be furious."

Thello gave a nasty, little laugh, and ran the tip of her tongue lightly over her lips. "Edith will have other things to think of," she said, "for Philip Warburton will have these letters before twenty-four hours have passed."

"Well," said Clare, rising, "you know your own business best. I must go. I have a heap of things to do. Are you going to the concert with me?"

"No," replied Thello, "I also 'have a heap of things to do.' You don't mind?"

"Not in the least," returned Clare, moving to the door. "I shall see you soon. Good-by."

"What luck I have," said Thello, looking at the bundle that she still held in her hand. "I can strike both my enemies at once, Philip Warburton and Maurice Denalguez; for a blow that strikes Warburton will reach his friend. I feel quite excited at the nearness of my triumph." She was passing from the room, when her eye fell upon the card which had been brought in some time previously. "Good heavens!" said she, taking it up, "I forget all about the stranger." She picked up the card, "Count Guerravillia. Guerravillia? I don't know the name." She rung the bell and a servant appeared. "Where is this gentleman?" said she.

"In the next room, ma'am." She walked to the *portière* and peeped through a crack.

"Gracious me!" said she, "he is very good looking, but he is fast asleep. Henry," she continued, turning to the servant, "Wake up the gentleman who is waiting in there, and ask him in here. I shall be back here in a minute." And carrying the letters with her, she left the room.

Immediately afterwards, the servant ushered into the room, where the above scene had taken place—*Maurice Denalguez*.

CHAPTER IX.

“THANKS,” said Denalguez, as he stepped into the room, suppressing a yawn as he came, and then as the servant retired, he looked around him. “A most satisfactory arrangement of rooms in this house! How could a woman of such cunning have given away such a chance of overhearing her plans! Could any more wonderful accident have happened than this? I knew these people were in danger, but I did not suppose that my fears would so soon be realized. How can I keep these letters from Philip, and how can I find out if Edith Warburton is worth saving? Faithorne is evidently the man; I must find him. It is all very dark as yet, but the light will come—the light will come,” and he threw himself into an arm-chair. He was almost immediately disturbed, however, by the entrance of Ethel. She still held in her hand the bundle of letters, and laid them upon the table by the divan as she bowed to the stranger.

“A thousand excuses for having kept you waiting,” said she.

"Not at all, Madame," returned Denalguez. "To tell the truth I have just completed the journey from Madrid to London, and I fell fast asleep in your charming boudoir. I have brought a letter from Prince Zourokoff—"

"I am charmed to think that Prince Zourokoff holds me in such grateful remembrance as to afford me the pleasure of making your acquaintance, Count Guerravillia. What a number of letters you have," said she, as Denalguez took several from his pocket and selected one, which he laid on the table.

"Yes," said Denalguez, "I am a social person, and always like to be prepared to make myself at home in whatever city I may find myself. Some of them, however, are a little difficult to deliver; as I have only the names. Here is one, for instance, Mr. Fernheim, Banker—nothing else—"

"But," said Ethel, "he is so well known any one can direct you."

"Then here is another," said Denalguez, "Sir Reginald Faithorne—"

"F, 3, Albany," said Thello. "Can you remember the address?"

"Oh, yes," said Denalguez with a smile of meaning which was lost upon his hostess. "I shall remember it. I am sure I am very much obliged to you for giving me this

assistance; I do not know how I can sufficiently thank you."

"By giving me news of Prince Zourokoff. How did you leave him?"

"In very bad spirits."

"I met him six years ago," continued Thello. "He was perfectly charming."

"I know," said Denalguez. "He told me you found him perfectly charming."

"He told you?"

"He told me that Mrs. Marsden was the most fascinating woman in London, and as amiable as she is beautiful. I confess I envy the Prince."

Thello threw him a rapid glance out of her purple eyes as her lips parted over her little teeth. "I think you are very impudent," said she.

"But I bring you Zourokoff's letter," said he, taking it up and holding it out.

"Ah!" ejaculated Ethel as she came forward to take it.

Denalguez drew it back. "But I repent having undertaken this commission," said he, "for after having seen you, it is cruel to have to bring you from another the homage that I would fain lay at your feet—to see you read before my very eyes, words that doubtless I dare not whisper to you."

Ethel Marsden turned on him again. "Do

you suppose," said she, "that I am going to let you say such things to me on two minutes' acquaintance?"

"Well, here is the letter," said Denalguez, "but do not open it until I am gone. Won't you grant me so small a favor as that?"

Thello looked at him, a gleam of intense amusement crossing her face, and then she threw the letter down upon the table unopened. "I expect I must keep up my reputation for amiability," she said, "though I think the Prince is most indiscreet. I do not deny that I was very much fascinated by the brilliant charm of the Prince's manner, but I ought not to have given him the merest chance of compromising me."

"Compromising you," echoed Denalguez. "At present I regret that our acquaintance is slight, but I am sure you are far too clever a woman to allow any one to compromise you. I am rather proud of myself as a judge of character, and I would give a great deal to study yours, even by the new science which doubtless you laugh at,—palmistry." He took her hand as he spoke, and looked at it. "So far," said he, "I can see indomitable resolution and patience to attain an end. Let me study you more deeply, and I wager I will tell you exactly what you are."

Thello drew away her hand, and walking over to the divan, threw herself upon it.

"You understand women pretty well," said she, "or at any rate, it seems so. I should like to hear your verdict."

"You think it is strange," said Denalguez, "that I should dare to speak so—but to confess the truth, I saw a picture of you that the Prince had, and from that moment I have been wild to know you. I have been in London several times since, and have seen you only to admire you more each time; but never have I been lucky enough to meet you. It seems as if I had known and worshipped you for all time."

"Good heavens!" said Ethel, raising herself on her elbow, and bringing to bear the full fire of the purple eyes upon her visitor. "And you expect, I suppose, to be rewarded for such devotion? Pray how long are you going to be in London?"

"As long as you will let me stay," answered Denalguez boldly.

"You do not suppose, my dear Count," said Ethel, "that I believe you would stay if I asked you?"

"Ask me—you would not dare—"

"And your country?—"

"A woman is a man's country," answered the visitor impetuously, as he arose and

crossed the room to throw himself into a little chair at her side. "What is life worth if we reduce it to the commonplace pattern dictated by hard, dry rules which people call conventionality? Is life worth living without impulse—impulse? The whole glorious, fiery sunlight of the world—what can compare with it? And you are not the woman to crush impulse. No," he had seized her hand, and continued rapidly: "See, your hand trembles, your eyes glisten, and they answer me, though your tongue refuses—"

"I entreat—I beg—Count Guerravilla, you will make me extremely angry." She rose, and he rose with her.

"Ah," said he in a regretful tone, "may I not even kiss your hand? Do not be cruel. Of course if you say you are angry, I must go," and he took up his hat. "But think how much I need study." He put his hat down again. "And of how much knowledge you are depriving an enthusiastic scholar."

"Nonsense, let us talk of other things."

"There is nothing else. You know it is not possible for a man to be with you and think of anything but you."

"Upon my word," said Thello, "if you are not better behaved, you shall never come to see me again. And now I am going to send you away."

“ May I call again soon? You had better say yes, or I won’t go.”

“ You are certainly a most dangerous man. I am not quite sure whether you amuse me very much, or make me very cross.”

“ Don’t be cross. Do you know what we do with a woman in Russia who is too cruel? I will tell you. We carry her off without further ceremony, so take care you do not come to Russia.”

“ I am not quite sure that I am safe *here*. You frighten me. I am always obeyed, and you must go at once. Good-by.”

“ And you won’t even let me kiss your hand?”

“ No.”

At that moment the voice of the servant was heard in the hall, saying: “I do not think Madame is at home.” Ethel arose hastily, and moved towards the door, dropping her handkerchief as she did so. Denalquez, following her, stooped and picked it up, at the same moment he snatched the bundle of letters from the table and put them in his pocket. He reached the door at the same time as she did, and as she gave him her hand, he raised it to his lips. “ You must let me come and see you again now,” said he, showing her the handkerchief which he had kept, “ if only to return this. And when you

see me again, you will treat me differently," and he moved away.

As he left, Ethel fell into a divan. "Well, upon my word," said she, "if that is the way they make love in Russia, I am very thankful that I am in England. It is perfectly awful."

Denalquez, as he left the house, lit a cigar.

"Not so bad, I think," said he to himself, "for a first engagement."

CHAPTER X.

It was with decidedly mixed feelings that Maurice Denalguez reached his rooms on the afternoon that he had left Thello Marsden in a condition of mind scarcely more lucid than his own. He was on the horns of a dilemma, as to the precise action that it was advisable to take, first, as regards the letters written to Faithorne, which he had rescued from Ethel Marsden, and secondly as to what course he should pursue with regard to the Warburtons, themselves. Like many a wise man before him, he decided he would sleep on the matter so that in the morning cool reflection might come, and accordingly on the following day his mind was made up. Made up, at any rate, in so far as he could himself compel events, and conscious of the perfection of his preliminaries, he decided to let things develop upon the basis that he had formed.

Accordingly, it was not long after breakfast, which with Denalguez, was an early meal, when he sate him down and wrote the following note :

“Captain Maurice Denalguez, having found

some letters belonging to Sir Reginald Faithorne, will call to return them to him at 12 o'clock, unless otherwise notified."

This laconic epistle he sealed up and sent to the Albany, and then his eye fell upon the slip which had accompanied the ill-fated missives.

"I return your letters, but I keep your peace of mind. Reginald Faithorne."

"A threat!" ejaculated he. "The coward! Poor old Philip, how can I save you? Much of course, will depend upon this man, Faithorne, but in any case it will be better to trust him, than to leave this weapon in the fair Marsden's hands. But why does he threaten? Ah, Marion, if you had but been true and had given me the right to defend your sister! What is to be done? I cannot challenge him; besides, even if I could, that would not serve Philip Warburton as I wish. I must know this man better before I can decide any future step. It strikes me I have undertaken more than I bargained for. So far I have played spy, eavesdropper rather, and though the act was unintentional, the fact remains. Does the end justify the means? Yes, I think so, if the end be successful. How can I make best use of my feloniously recovered letters? Well, Mrs. Warburton, if your penitence be true, you shall destroy all trace of

74084B

your folly as far as you are concerned. As for Faithorne, I must ensure his silence in spite of his threat."

Denalguez turned once more to his writing. He was astonished when he next looked up to find that it was growing late. "Ten minutes to twelve," exclaimed he, starting up. "Goodness, how time flies! I must go. Good luck attend me."

As he made for the door, it was opened from the outside, and a servant announced "Sir Reginald Faithorne." The two men bowed, Faithorne with rigid politeness, Denalguez with unconcealed amazement.

"To what do I owe this unexpected honor?" said he.

"To your own peculiar proceedings, Captain Denalguez," returned Faithorne. "I have my own reasons for reading between the lines of your note to me, and choose to believe that your motive must be strong for having obtained possession of my property, or I need hardly say that I should have taken advantage of the good fortune that you are a foreigner, and should have sent a friend to demand satisfaction where I now ask for an explanation."

Denalguez bowed, and motioned his visitor to take a seat, resuming his own as he did so. "I beg you will believe," said he, "that I

should not shirk the penalty of any act of mine by which you may consider yourself aggrieved."

"That assurance from you, Captain Denalguez," returned Faithorne ceremoniously, "is unnecessary. Er—how did you—er—*find* my letters?"

"I stole them."

Faithorne did not move from his place. He looked at his boots one after the other, and then removed a fleck of dust from one knee; then he arranged his stick between his legs, and shifted his hat from one hand to the other. Finally he looked up at Denalguez, and said coldly,

"You must, of course, expect that I shall require a very good reason for so extraordinary a proceeding, as you must, of course, realize the unpleasant position which you have made for yourself."

"I appreciate my position fully," returned Denalguez, "and I am prepared to abide its results. Sir Reginald Faithorne, you remove much cause for embarrassment by the way in which you have taken this altogether unusual episode. You rightly judge that such a course as mine could have been adopted only for extreme reasons. Had I waited to inspire sufficient confidence in Mrs. Warburton to allow me to extricate her from her difficulty,

who knows if my interference would have been of much use?"

"Captain Denalguez," said Faithorne, "we have here in London a large firm of pickle manufacturers, called Crosse & Blackwell. Both of these gentlemen have made enormous fortunes. Can you conceive how they made them?"

"In the usual course of trade, I presume."

"No, sir; by attending carefully to their own business."

Denalguez flushed. "Your rebuke is just," said he; "however, to the point: my reason for getting Mrs. Warburton's letters was to give her the power of securing her future—peace of mind."

"Suppose," said Faithorne, "I accepted your—pardon me—somewhat Quixotic method of defending your friend, as sufficient excuse for obtaining my property—by force—that's putting it as temperately as possible, I think—what do you propose to do with her letters?"

"I propose asking you to find some safer means of delivery, than that from which I rescued them. I would offer to be myself the messenger, but I think it better Mrs. Warburton should remain in ignorance of my efforts in her behalf. Will you take them?"

"Certainly," said Faithorne. "Meanwhile,

however, Mrs. Warburton will think I am keeping what I promised to return. Well, I confess I don't care particularly what Mrs. Warburton thinks. You may have expected, Captain Denalguez, that I should be ridiculous enough to challenge you. Oh, no! *Pas si bête* I do not risk my life in such a cause. You cannot help seeing that I have already the best of the situation."

"It is admitted already," returned Denalguez coldly, and then added to himself, "And it is for *this* that a woman throws away name, home and honor."

"You see," pursued Faithorne imperturbably, "the golden rule in life is to take things coolly. You are a good fellow, so am I, and I am glad to find that we understand each other perfectly. Why, it would be the height of nonsense to endanger our lives for a tiresome woman—"

"Then why hold a threat over her?"

"That, of course, is my business. And though I have no objection to your minding your friend Warburton's, I distinctly object to your interfering in mine. Your old-fashioned devotion, Captain Denalguez, makes me feel positively philanthropic, and I should like to do you a good turn."

"A good turn," echoed Denalguez, not a little astonished at what he considered to be

the amazing impertinence of his visitor. However, he realized that he had brought the gay baronet to a tractable state of mind comparatively quick, and felt that he must be allowed some latitude.

"Yes," returned the man. "You are quite sure you are not a little in love with Mrs. Warburton, yourself."

"You tread dangerously near the boundary between right and insult."

"I am answered. The great advantage of this nineteenth century of ours, is that instead of killing each other first and then explaining afterward, we reverse the process, and it saves lots of trouble, and some life. Now, if we had lived in, say the fifteenth century, we should have fought and died, and the chronicles would have told our descendants how nobly we bled for nothing. Your explanation suits me—I have nothing left to explain, and —one moment, I have nearly finished—you say I am taking advantage of the advantage which I already possess. I will prove to the contrary. You do not take this trouble for Warburton alone—er—Marion Wurmsley is a charming girl."

"Sir Reginald Faithorne, that is enough," interrupted Denalguetz. "You presume. So far as I have felt my own conduct justified yours, I have submitted to your insolence for

friendship's sake, but there is a limit, even to my endurance, and be good enough to remember that, apart from the subject we have already discussed, I resume my independence."

"But I wished to tell you something interesting about Marion," said Faithorne.

"And I tell you, I do not desire to hear."

"A thousand pardons, it was really not mere impertinence that dictated my questions. Am I to understand that Miss Wurmsley is nothing to you?"

"Nothing," and turning on his heel, Denalguez walked to the window.

I have conveyed, or tried to convey at the outset of this story, that Sir Reginald Faithorne was in every respect a gentleman as far as birth and breeding were concerned. The delicious impudence with which he turned the tables upon Denalguez at this interview requires consequently a word of explanation. He had a feeling of intense appreciation for the perfect honesty displayed by Denalguez during the difficult interview just concluded. The evident struggle betwixt indomitable pride and the resolution to endure the consequences of his interference, inspired Faithorne with genuine admiration for this really good fellow whom he knew to be the victim of Thello's malice.

It will be remembered that he had overheard the treacherous fabrications of Ethel Marsden on the occasion of his visit to Wimbeldon Lodge, when the malicious Thello took advantage of Marion's ignorance, innocence and youth, to undermine with a few artfully contrived phrases the girl's confidence in her Spanish lover.

When Maurice Denalguez closed the colloquy with the laconic, heart-broken negative above recorded, Sir Reginald Faithorne arose to go.

"In ending this interview," said he, "I must say to you, Captain Denalguez, that I wish we had met under other circumstances, and I give you my assurance that Mrs. Warburton shall have no annoyance from me, unless she herself provokes it. One word more. Does Mrs. Marsden know that you have the letters?"

"No," replied Denalguez, "she does not know I have the letters."

"You asked why I threaten. I give you my word that if Mrs. Warburton's very innocent follies ever become known, it will be entirely through her own avowal of them." He bowed to Denalguez, who returned his salutation, and turned towards the door, which at that moment was opened by a servant, announcing Mrs. Warburton. Finding

herself face to face with Faithorne, she started violently and turned color, but recovered her presence of mind immediately. Denalguez came forward, saying,

"This is indeed a surprise, the more pleasant for being entirely unlooked for."

"I fear I come at an awkward moment," said Edith. "You are busy."

"On the contrary," returned Denalguez, "let me present to you Sir Reginald Faithorne."

"Oh," said Faithorne, "Mrs. Warburton and I are old friends."

She bowed to Faithorne, and then continued: "Philip was obliged to go away this morning, so he asked me to call and tell you about to-night. He says you must come to father's and he will not be denied."

"I cannot go to your father's," returned Denalguez shortly.

"But you must," pleaded Edith. "My husband will think that I am a poor advocate if I do not succeed in winning you over."

"Captain Denalguez cannot resist such a pleader, I am sure," put in Faithorne. "Your husband, Mrs. Warburton, is indeed a lucky man. It is the sight of such happiness that makes one inclined to give up bachelorhood. I have been thinking for some time of settling

down," continued he, with meaning, "and you have decided me."

"I don't see what you have been waiting for," said Edith shortly.

"Well," continued Faithorne, "you cannot be blind to the fashion that it has become for young married women to have a 'slave.'"

"Is he a slave?" put in Denalguez, who had resumed his seat at the writing-table.

"Yes," pursued Faithorne, "and a dangerous one, but manageable under ordinary treatment. He only kicks over the traces when he is pulled up too short. It is this custom recognized, tolerated and unchallenged, that has kept me from marriage. Egad! It makes a man careful, but I decided yesterday, and I do not regret my first steps in the right road."

"Do I know the lady?" said Edith.
"When may I offer my congratulations?"

"Soon,—very soon," said Faithorne, nodding sagely, "and now good-by."

A servant entered at the moment, bearing a card which he gave to Denalguez.

"In the library?" said the latter. "Pardon me one moment, Mrs. Warburton. An important message from my chief. Will you excuse me?" and replying to Edith's bow, he left the room and the two together.

CHAPTER XI.

THE moment Denalguez' back was turned, Edith Warburton's manner underwent an entire change. Turning abruptly, she said to Faithorne who was standing near the door, "Why did you not send my letters, as you promised?"

"I did send them," replied Faithorne, tapping the pocket where the bundle of letters lay.

"I have not received them."

"Really?"

"How can you be so cruel?"

"I promised to send your letters, I sent them—there ends my share of the matter."

"But Ethel says that she has not got them," continued Edith, almost feverishly. "If she says so, it must be true—you did *not* send them!"

"I will not say that that is a falsehood," said Faithorne gravely, "but I must say that you are asserting what is not true in the rudest way possible."

Edith did not seem to notice his words, but began pacing restlessly to and fro between

the window and the fireplace. "I cannot rest till I get those letters," she said. "Why was I so foolish as to write them?"

"It was imprudent," assented Faithorne, coolly.

"Never mind," broke out Edith. "I will endure this no longer. I will tell my father, and you must tell him too, that I have only been reckless and blind, but not sinful. You will do this?"

"I think not," said Faithorne laconically.

She turned upon him, flinging out her arms in a gesture of despair. "Do you mean to say," said she, "that you refuse to speak the truth?"

"My dear," said Sir Reginald Faithorne, imperturbably, "you are too impetuous. You chose yesterday to take care of yourself, and released me without much ceremony from any further allegiance. Pardon me if I remark that I have been your tame cat as long as I intend to fill that domestic office. If you think you can play with fire and remain unscorched, you are mistaken. There may be salamanders, but assuredly you are not one."

"Why did you pursue me, and, with the rest, persuade me that I was doing no harm? I never meant wrong."

"No harm," echoed Faithorne, with a dry laugh. "Charming, all you women are!"

You expect to take up the major portion of a man's time, and even exact an account of his actions, reserving to yourselves the right to kick him out with a good deal less notice than you give your servant."

Edith Warburton had dropped into a chair.
"I have deserved my punishment," said she,
"but I ask so little of you—only tell my father—"

"Why tell your father what would only pain him, and of which he is in ignorance? I have never paid you any more attention than your sister; indeed during my intimacy it has been my constant care to appear more interested in Marion than you. We have been no little helped by Thello. Besides, look at it from another point of view: you wish to conceal your little escapade, and start by insisting on proclaiming it to the world. Could anything be more idiotic?"

"Oh," broke forth Edith, hysterically, "can you not understand? It is not enough to know that your fault is hidden. I want to cry aloud that though I have been weak and wilful, I have not been so, past retreat. As soon as I awakened and realized my error, I broke from the meshes of my folly, that might have become sin. I awakened—do you hear—it was I—"

The calmness of Faithorne was in singular

contrast to the agitation of the other participant of this interview, and he now cut in calmly with the remark, "And you still think because you have not paid your fare, that you had not reached very near the end of your destination! Well, well, you travelled free, you ought to be comforted. Be calm, I have only been teaching you a little lesson. Here are your letters."

As he spoke, he took them from his pocket and held them out to her. She snatched them eagerly from his hand; Faithorne watched her with a quiet smile. A servant entered the room bearing a card which he gave to Edith. It was one of Ethel Marsden's and upon it was written in pencil : "*Ask me in. I want particularly to see you and Captain Denalguez.*" As she read it, Denalguez himself entered the room by the opposite door, and going to the table took up two or three papers that lay upon it preparatory to going out again.

"I have only to consign these papers to my visitor," said he to Edith, "and I shall be with you again. Sir Reginald," added he to that gentleman, who had risen to his feet, "may I ask you to wait a few moments."

"I am entirely at your service," said Faithorne, dropping into his seat once more.

"You know," continued Denalguez to Edith as he made once more for the door,

"it is only duty of the most pressing kind that could make me leave you in this way."

"Captain Denalguetz," answered she, "do you mind my asking a lady in for a moment? She has just sent a card, saying that she wants to speak to me. She is an old friend —"

"Can you ask?" interrupted Denalguetz. "You are at home. Do you wish to see her privately? Please give any orders you choose. I hope you will do me the honor of presenting me to your friend. Pardon me for a moment—I shall be with you again," and he went out of the room.

"Ask the lady to come in," said she to the servant, who still waited. And she added to herself, "How did she know that I was here, I wonder." Then walking to the fireplace she threw the letters into the fire that was blazing there.

The next moment Ethel entered the room. On seeing the two together, she merely nodded to Faithorne, saying as she passed him, "Hello! made it up?" And Faithorne nodded briefly as he walked over to sit in the arm-chair by the table, and taking up a paper began to read. The two women greeted one another.

"My dear," said Ethel, "what luck. I was looking everywhere for you, when, passing

here, I saw your carriage at the door. I stopped and asked your man whose house it was, and when I heard, nothing could have induced me to go. I made up my mind that I would see your husband's friend. Where is he? I will tell you some day why I am so interested in him."

"And you really have never met him?" said Edith.

"Never, of course," answered Thello. "If I had, why should I be so anxious to see him?"

"Well," said Edith, "I will present you in form. Were you much bored by the emissary from Russia after I left you yesterday?"

Ethel gave a little silvery laugh. "Oh, my dear child," she said, "it was a most ridiculous thing. You know we were talking when the servant announced him, and I never looked at the card. However, you remember I said not at home, and then I said that I would see him. Imagine my surprise when I came back to the drawing-room after leaving you, I found that he was a particularly charming friend of mine." Thello did not observe that at this point in the discourse, Denalquez had quietly reentered the room and was standing, waiting until she should have finished her speech, to be presented.

"A man whom I have known for years,"

she went on, "and I wouldn't have missed seeing him for anything. He was an ancient sweetheart of mine, and it made me feel quite old, looking at him and thinking of the years that we have been friends. You must know him—I must present him to you. I am sure that you will delight in him, for he has been all over the world. Talk of adventures—" she stopped suddenly as she raised her eyes and caught those of Denalguez fixed upon her face. She uttered a little involuntary gasp, and Edith, following the direction of her eyes, said quietly,

"Mrs. Marsden, Captain Maurice Denalguez."

Denalguez bowed gravely, and advanced with a twinkle in his eye, as he said, "My pleasure in welcoming a friend of Mrs. Warburton, is doubled by that friend being you, Mrs. Marsden. I am indeed fortunate on my return to receive as my first guests, the wife of my dearest and best friend, and the most fascinating woman in London, who is so well known to so many of my intimate friends."

Whilst he said this, Thello had recovered her presence of mind, and her purple eyes were now dancing with a mixture of excitement, amusement, and fury.

"It is charming of you," said she, "to for-

get that I invaded your sanctum, but I have wanted to meet you for a long time. However, I never thought that our meeting would be under such dramatic circumstances. It seems unfortunate, does it not? that Mr. Warburton doesn't like me, for Edith and I are such old friends."

"Oh, my dear," said Edith, "it is no use speaking of Philip to Captain Denalguez; each to the other is a paragon of all that is right."

"Of course, of course," said Ethel, "but it is such nonsense—the idea of poor little *me* being dangerous. Do you think, Captain Denalguez," she added, turning to him with her head on one side like a mischievous parrot, "do you think that I could do any one any harm?"

"What a question!" said Denalguez.

"That is no answer," continued Thello, "well—?"

"Well," said Denalguez, as if he were revolving a deep problem, "I know that if you were to smile upon me too bewitchingly you would indeed be dangerous," and he drew out of the pocket of his coat the handkerchief he had captured from Thello the day before and showed it to her, concealed in his hand as he spoke.

Thello, whose greatest redeeming quality

was perhaps her unconquerable sense of humor, burst out laughing to the no small mystification of Edith, and her laugh was answered by Faithorne, who rose at this moment with a copy of a society weekly in his hand.

"And what is amusing *you*?" said Thello, looking at him a trifle viciously.

"To-day's *Tattler*," answered he. "It is delicious. Have you read it?"

"Not this week's," replied Ethel. "How goes it?"

"Why," said Faithorne, "the Bad Fairy has had a terrible set-down."

"Oh," said Denalguez, "a story for children, I suppose—a fairy tale?"

"Oh, dear no," said Faithorne, "but an anonymous story which all London is discussing at this moment. It is called 'Arcadia versus Hades,' and it is a modern story for grown up children, served up week by week in the form of a myth. The scene is Arcadia—in it we have Phyllis weary of Corydon—not, however, that she is pining after any particular Strephon."

"If she indeed resembles her earthly prototype," interrupted Denalguez, who had caught the spirit of the fable, "she probably complains that the lambs are too spotlessly white, the crooks too gold, the ribbons too blue, and Corydon too faithful."

Thello answered promptly, "And she would be right. One cannot live entirely on caramels. I should die without my olives." The last sentence was accompanied with a flash from the wondrous eyes.

"There is the Bad Fairy who tries to lead Phyllis away," explained Faithorne, looking steadily at Thello. Then turning his eyes on Denalguez, "A good fairy, who tries to save her—"

"And," broke in Thello, "a mischievous fairy, who complicates matters."

"Why," asked Denalguez, "did Phyllis wish to leave Arcadia?"

"She did not wish to leave it," put in Edith at this point abstractedly, "at least not till she was taught to believe that it was stupid and dull."

"Phyllis was quick at her lessons as all good little girls should be," put in Ethel, maliciously.

Faithorne was about to continue his reading in answer to Denalguez' questions, when, catching Edith's eye, he handed her the paper, and said :

"You read it to us, Mrs. Warburton."

She took the paper mechanically and read : "She allowed herself to be taken away blindfolded, but in spite of the excitement of the journey, she could not quite shake off her

misgivings. When she had travelled a long way, she began to miss the loving care Corydon had lavished upon her, and which had been so much a part of her life that it had become unheeded. She found in the new land so many jostling hither and thither that she became afraid, and a restlessness to be at home, at peace, overtook her. At length she tore the bandage from her eyes, and saw not far before her a ledge of rocks that divided the two lands. She hesitated a moment, then turning her back upon the new, tried to find her way back to the old land, unaided and alone."

"Poor Phyllis," and she laid the paper down, and it dropped to the floor as she leaned back in her chair, and Faithorne stooped to pick it up.

"Well," said Thello, "Phyllis is so weak I have no patience with her. I should have gone over if it had been headlong."

"And that," said Denalguez, who was somewhat mystified, "seems to be the end of the story; Phyllis is saved."

"No," said Faithorne, a fragment of a smile twitching up one corner of his mouth. "The Bad Fairy is not so easily beaten, as this last sentence will show," and he made believe to go on reading where Edith had left off: "Phyllis turned sadly from the land she

had dreamed was so beautiful, wondering if Corydon would forgive her, and if he were slumbering as she had left him. Meanwhile the Good and the Bad Fairy were hurrying on far in advance of poor Phyllis. The Good Fairy hoped to get back to Arcadia and keep Corydon asleep until Phyllis came home, but the Bad Fairy travelled faster, and on the road found a powerful Talisman which was to awaken Corydon. Which will reach Arcadia first?" And he closed the paper as he laid it down upon the table.

A light was beginning to dawn upon Maurice Denalguez. "I shall watch with much interest," said he, "the fortunes of Arcadia."

"So shall I," said Faithorne.

"Well, good-by, Captain Denalguez," said Ethel, "I must go now, but I am so glad to have met you—at last. I am always at home at five—come when you can—and soon. Are you ready, Edith?"

"Yes," said Edith; then adding to Denalguez, "You have no message for Philip?"

"Yes," answered Denalguez, who had been thinking deeply. "Will you give him a letter for me? I won't keep you a moment."

"Why, of course," replied Edith, and she seated herself in an arm-chair by the window. Thello was sitting at the fireplace, and

Faithorne came and leaned over the back of her chair. He pointed to Denalguez as he said, softly :

“ How did he get the letters ? ”

“ Didn’t he tell you ? ”

“ No, but I bet you were sold somehow.”

“ Do you think so ? ” said Thello, opening her purple eyes wide, and turning up her face so that there was about four inches between her own and Faithorne’s ; “ where are the letters now ? ” she continued.

“ Safe—burned,” answered he, “ admit that you are beaten.”

“ No one is infallible,” returned Ethel, with a light laugh ; “ by the by, Faithorne, do you mean to do as you said yesterday afternoon —marry ? ”

“ Most assuredly,” replied that gentleman. “ I proposed formally this morning, and I am to receive my answer to-night.”

“ Cunning of you, wasn’t it,” returned Thello, “ to keep the girl going whilst you were making love to Edith.” Then after a little pause, she looked up at him again and said, “ You are a sweet thing.”

“ Yes, I *am* nice,” returned Faithorne in the same tone. “ You see,” he continued, “ a man must take care of his character, and if Edith had thrown me over and I had had

nothing in reserve, I might have done something desperate."

"Gracious," said Thello, "what do you call marriage?"

"When a man has lived as I have," returned Faithorne, he knows where to find a wife *and her friends.*" As he spoke, Thello's eye fell upon the little note which Faithorne had enclosed with the letters, which Denalguez had left upon the table at her side. Denalguez himself was writing at a *secretaire* his back turned towards them.

"I wish," said Ethel, "that you would find my purse for me; I put it down somewhere a moment ago."

He came around her chair and leaned over the table to get the purse from the other side where it lay. As he did so, she snatched up the little scrap of paper, and thrust it into her muff. "Phyllis, my dear," said she, turning to the unconscious Edith, "look out for yourself!"

Denalguez was reading over the note he had written, which concluded with the words—"so you see, my dear Philip, there must be reasons stronger than you can guess for my refusal to be present to-night. I cannot possibly—" he was interrupted by the entrance of a servant, announcing Mr. Wurmsley.

"Captain Denalguez," said the new-comer

with hurried pomposity, as he advanced into the room, distributing greetings all around as he came, and not seeming to notice the incongruity of the party assembled. "I come an unbidden guest, but—"

"You are no less welcome I am sure," interposed Denalguez, with some show of agitation, wondering what horrible mischance could have brought Edith's father there at that moment.

"I came," interposed Edith in turn, "to make sure of Captain Denalguez for you to-night, papa."

"If I had known that," said Mr. Wurmsley, "I need not have intruded. The fact is, I have determined there must be no mistake about to-night. You see, Captain Denalguez, Philip Warburton would find no pleasure if you were not of our party. The reception is for nine o'clock. The family only—and of course you are one of us—will be at dinner, we can then have a chat before the guests arrive. To tell you the truth, I have a particular reason for desiring the presence of my relatives and intimates, apart from the pleasure of their company. I need not make a secret of what is to be announced to-night. I have been asked for my daughter Marion's hand, and I was to give my answer to-night. I give it—my consent,—now." He took

Faithorne's hand in his as he spoke, and amid the astonishment of the others, the silence was almost audible.

"It seems strange, my dear Reginald," continued he, with much unction, "that we should meet like this. It was an impulse that brought me here, and it would be nonsense to keep you in suspense when my answer is 'yes.'"

Even the imperturbable Faithorne was embarrassed for a moment, as he answered, "I am much honored, I am sure. May I ask the privilege of being the first to speak to Marion?"

"Most assuredly, most assuredly," said Mr. Wurmsley. "I do not believe in saying to a girl, 'You are to marry Mr. So and So.' A lover should plead his own cause."

By this time Thello had recovered herself, and advancing to Faithorne, she said with her adorable grin, "Let me be the first, Sir Reginald, to say how glad I am to know of your good fortune, though I am not altogether surprised. I should be dull indeed if your devotion had escaped me." And then dropping her voice, she said as she resumed her former manner, "You are a sweet thing."

"Yes," returned Faithorne as before, "*I am nice.*"

Maurice Denalquez had been watching Edith anxiously whilst the above colloquy had

taken place. She had seemed on the point of speaking once or twice, but words seemed to fail her. Now Sir Reginald Faithorne came to her side, and looking her in the eyes, with an expression that for her seemed full of threat, though to the others his manner seemed naught but most courteous, he said, "You will congratulate me, will you not? We have always been such good *friends* that I cannot doubt your welcome."

"My God," exclaimed Denalguez to himself, as she still remained silent, "will she not speak?" A few moments later, after what was getting to be an embarrassing pause, Edith took her departure with her father, and Sir Reginald Faithorne, offering his arm to Mrs. Marsden, led her to her carriage.

CHAPTER XII.

THE evening of the same day was destined to be a momentous one in the lives of all the actors in this drama. At the house of Mr. Botolph Wurmsley, a family party had assembled, which was to be followed by a reception later on, and though the thing had been comparatively unforeseen, Mr. Wurmsley promised himself the satisfaction of making the announcement of his daughter's engagement to Sir Reginald Faithorne, under circumstances highly gratifying to his self-esteem.

The dreary dinner was drawing to a close, and Marion, who had excused herself, was sitting in the drawing-room alone. She had thought that Denalquez would be of the party, and shrinking from meeting him had dined alone. She was mistaken, however, for Denalquez had clung to his resolution not to attend, hoping to be able to see Philip Warburton and to ascertain if possible the exact state of that gentleman's mind, and the extent to which he was informed in regard to the events which were happening around him,

principally with himself as their objective point.

Marion sat in the drawing-room alone, reflecting deeply; and the world seemed a very strange place to her just then. She knew Maurice Denalguez had come back, for Edith had mentioned having seen him. Her father had been dropping ominous hints all day, and she gathered that she was at that moment the object of some scheme in her father's mind, of whose nature she was unable to form any conjecture, though her experience of her father's schemes for the welfare of his daughters caused her a certain vague alarm.

"What can be the surprise," said she to herself, "that father said I was to have to-night, with his odd remarks about being a 'strange little girl,' and 'keeping her father in the dark.' He said it was something very important. There is nothing I think important now. There might have been long ago," and the child sighed deeply as she looked out of the window at the people passing and repassing in the cool of the summer night, in the park just over the way. "And yet," continued she to herself, "it does not seem to be so very long ago, either," and taking a little letter case from her pocket, she drew therefrom an oft-folded and unfolded letter, which she smoothed out tenderly and read to herself

as she had done, probably, many hundreds of times before.

"My dear Mr. Wurmsley," it read, "I do not know whether you are prepared for this communication from me, but I will be brief. I want you to give me your daughter Marion for my wife. No promise has been given or asked between us yet, but I do not fear, if you will give your consent, of gaining hers.

"MAURICE DENALGUEZ."

She read the signature over again, as she pressed her lips to it, and then refolded the paper and restored it to its place.

"How happy I was when this came," said she. "And with what pride I said to Edith on her birthday, 'A letter came from St. Petersburg to-day for father. I know it is asking after me,' and not ten minutes afterwards I knew that my hopes were killed. How cruel it was of him, and how kind Mrs. Marsden was to that poor little girl." As she thus reflected, the object of her reflections entered the room.

"Are'n't you surprised to see me at this unusual hour?" said Thello as she greeted the girl. "The fact is, I have had nothing in the world to do between my quiet dinner, which takes me no time at all, and your party later on; so I thought I would come and play

a game of piquet with your father, as I had not been able to dine here."

"I was just thinking of you," returned Marion, "and of a subject—you know—which I have always avoided. It is not a pleasant one to me as you may imagine. Do you ever sit dreaming over the fire and reading pictures there?"

"Sometimes," returned Thello, beginning to feel a trifle uncomfortable.

"I do often," pursued Marion, in the same tone. "I can never look for long into the fire without thinking of some one, and it seems to me it is the same thing as I sit here and look out of the window into the park. I see him all the time." She paused for a moment, and then went on in the same unheeding tone. "Wasn't it curious that you should have told me about that girl being wronged by him when you did not even know that I knew him, much less"—and her voice sank to a whisper—"how I loved him? You did not guess how your words nearly broke my heart, did you?"

"Come, come," said Ethel Marsden, becoming more and more uneasy; "you must not have such sad thoughts to-night of all nights."

"Think how lucky it was," pursued Marion, not noticing the interruption, "that you happened to tell me just then. In a few days it

would have been too late. Could you believe it? he had proposed to my father for me that very morning. I never could have supposed a man could be so wicked."

"It is very dreadful," said Thello, taking refuge in a pained expression of face which she simulated to perfection.

"I am going to ask your advice, Mrs. Marsden," went on the girl. "I think I ought to tell Philip how deceived he is in Maurice Denalquez. You know Philip doesn't know that he proposed for me. No one knows—when father told me—what was in the letter—I only answered, 'I refuse, and I hope you will not persuade me.' Don't you think it would be right to tell Philip?"

The perturbed condition of Thello's mind was, fortunately for her, not apparent in her face, as she answered, "Well, my dear, you know it would be a little awkward for *you*. Of course *I* might; but then your brother-in-law and I are not on very cordial terms. There is no use disguising the fact. Since the fuss on Edith's birthday it has been extremely unpleasant. We never meet, but I know he is still unjust to me. When they come in after dinner, we can easily avoid each other."

"Perhaps you will not believe it," said Marion, "but I was very near disliking you

once. I am so fond of Philip that I suppose I was prejudiced; but when you told me about that girl, I knew you must be tender-hearted and good to try and cheer her when you had so much else to do. I am only glad —yes, very glad—that I was warned in time,” and turning, she walked over towards the fireplace to hide the tears that she could not suppress any longer.

“Goodness me ! ” said Thello, looking after her, with some anxiety, “this young woman will spoil all my plans if I am not careful. Do you know,” continued she, aloud, as if suddenly starting a new train of thought, “I do not care to see Philip Warburton before the other people come. Is dinner over, do you think ? ”

“Scarcely,” said Marion. “Philip rushed in from the city just in time. His servant brought his things, and he is going to dress directly after dinner, so you are not likely to meet. I will go and see how long they are likely to be. Do you know that Edith is quite ill ? I made her lie down, and now she is asleep. I hope the rest will do her good. I told Philip he was not to have her wakened. But everything seems to have gone wrong to-night, there seems to be something dreadful in the air. It is as if there was a gloom over us.”

"Edith ill!" echoed Ethel Marsden, "well, it is getting late. Don't you think you had better go to her? Don't mind me, run away; but, by the by, about what you asked me—I don't think you had better speak to Philip just at present. Men are queer creatures and look at things in a different way from women. Leave it alone for a little while."

"Well," answered Marion, "I was sure that you knew best, and would tell me the right thing to do. I think I will go to Edith if you are sure you do not mind?"

"Not a bit," replied she, and the girl left the Machiavelian Thello alone.

Left by herself, Thello dropped into the seat which Marion had vacated and began to think over the events of the day. As the recollection came back to her, her little malicious smile parted her teeth again, and she remarked to herself,

"How I enjoyed this morning, as soon as I recovered from the shock of finding the Count Guerravilla, who adored me yesterday, was my mortal enemy, Maurice Denalguez—to-day. First trick to you, Captain Denalguez. Will the next be mine, I wonder? You worked hard enough to keep Edith's fault from her husband, but your work was crude. I wonder if any one would take so much trouble for

me?" She rose with a little gesture of indignation, and began pacing the room with her characteristic and hesitating little glide. "Why should such a woman, with neither heart nor brain, be tenderly cared for, as though she were something finer than the rest of creation?—and Philip Warburton, with his virtuous pride, did not think me good enough to associate with his wife! We shall see how it will be in the end. I can awaken Corydon and spoil Phyllis' return, though the Good Fairy thinks my talisman is lost—sleep on, dream on, my Arcadians, in your fancied security—you shall wake at my bidding. Oh! my puppets, I hold you in the hollow of my hand, and though the hand is small, the grasp is firm." She sank into the chair again, the strain somewhat removed by motion, and pursued her chain of thought. "I have so much satisfaction within my reach, that I do not know where to strike first. What will be the result of awakening my Arcadians? It will dispose of Warburton and dear, delicate Edith, but it will also effectually stop Marion's marriage with Faithorne, leaving her free. Explanations might then take place between her and Denalguez—might, yes, but *must not!* —*shall not!* That will be my task. I am sorry that I must hurt that child, Marion, but it is war, and I will not be beaten."

As she came to this conclusion, the object of her cogitations came running in.

"Oh, Mrs. Marsden," said she, "what shall I do? Captain Denalguez has just called and asked to see me, and I do not know what answer to make. I want to be determined, for I know he is unworthy and has behaved most basely. But he is so handsome, and so clever, and it is so long since I have seen him that I fear I shall break down. If he should question me, he might find out I had been to see that girl, and I should be so ashamed. Of course I know there was no harm in going or you would not have taken me."

"No harm," echoed Ethel, "no, my dear, but very indiscreet, as I told you when you insisted on going—and I am afraid your father will be very angry with me when he knows—"

"But he will not know—"

"You cannot prevent his knowing—if Captain Denalguez learns of your visit—"

"Captain Denalguez shall not learn it from me, I promise you. You give me strength, Mrs. Marsden. I might have shown some weakness if I alone had to suffer rebuke for the impulse that led me thither, but the thought that you might be blamed for what was an act of charity and kindness, will keep

my lips sealed. No entreaties shall gain from me the knowledge I possess. You do not doubt me, surely?"

"My dear child," said Ethel, "no one could possibly doubt you. See, your hair is all tumbled. Come and make yourself tidy before seeing Captain Denalguez. It would not do for him to see you looking so excited. Ask for him to be sent here." As she spoke she had rung a little hand-bell and a servant came in.

"Ask Captain Denalguez to come in here," said Marion, and the servant left the room.

"Now run away and put your hair straight," said Thello, and Marion preceded her through the *portières*.

"How lucky I am," said Thello to herself, as she followed her. "This unexpected move would have ruined my whole plan. But now I am on safe ground again."

She followed Marion out of the room as Maurice Denalguez was shown into it by another door.

Denalguez's state of mind was decidedly mixed. "I wonder," said he to himself as he looked around the room and ascertained that it was empty, "if I am wrong in seeking an explanation from Marion. My pride at first said 'no'; but through all the misery of this morning there came to me a hope that she

had not refused me for another. Whatever be the reason, no other love taught her to forget mine. She does not know yet, I suppose, that to-night her hand will be sought by Faithorne. The man was honest after all in asking me if I had any claim on her. I wonder if I am doing the right thing by him in coming here now?" He walked up and down the room twice before answering himself. As he came to a full stop, in front of the looking-glass, he said, "Yes, for if she means to accept him to-night, my visit cannot possibly affect her decision."

He stopped as in the glass he saw Marion enter the room behind him. She was obviously nervous and ill at ease, and he permitted a moment to pass before he let her know that he had seen her. Then he turned slowly, and bowed with ceremony. She returned the salutation, and sank into a chair.

"I have till now," began Denalguez, approaching the girl, "accepted your strange disposal of me, but I will not let to-day pass without making an effort to understand it. What is it that has become between us, Marion?"

She remained silent, and he made a little gesture of despair.

"Are you happy?" he continued.

"Yes."

The reply was almost inaudible, but Denalguez's anxious ear caught it, and man of the world as he was, he could not restrain a momentary heart-throb as he read in her tone the denial of her words.

"Why did you treat me so cruelly?" he said at last.

"Ask your own heart."

"I find no answer there, or I should not seek it from your lips. Tell me, what have I done?"

"It is a matter I do not choose to discuss," said Marion, firmly, rising and moving away from him. He followed her a step, and then he said,

"But, child that you are, you cannot—you must not dispose of our lives in that passionless way. Remember," and his voice became very grave, "if I leave you now, you send me to a bitter, hopeless existence." He paused, and as she gave him no sign, he took another step forward, and exclaimed almost roughly,

"A man at my age cannot begin a fresh life with the dawn of each day. Even *you* have not done that, or I should not be here." Then controlling himself again, he went on. "Can it be that I, by my own pride, have robbed myself of your love? I should have sought you before to ask your reasons, but it was the knowledge that I had done nothing

that could offend you that made me acquiesce in what was to me inexplicable. I have always been honest with you, I told you what my past had been when we first met. You were but a child to me then, yet how full of womanly sympathy. As we grew more to each other, I told you that my life was no fit mate for yours, that I, whose love was beaten and bruised, had no right to ask a resting place in your fresh young heart. You set aside my fears, you gave me hope."

He became silent, and seemed waiting for her reply. He waited in vain for a few moments, then he continued in a harder voice. "What could have been your reason for deceiving me so? It is neither just nor natural. Once more, will you tell me your reason for rejecting me?"

"And once more I reply," returned Marion at last, an accent of despair in her voice, "that there is no need that the reason should be discussed. The kindest thing you can do is to let me forget. Do not force me to say what I think of your pretended ignorance—"

Denalguetz interrupted her with a movement of his hand. "I have done—and I beg that you also will spare me any more on this subject. I thought that I had sounded the depths of misery in my life, but I had yet to encounter the cruelty, the wanton cruelty, of

a child. And believe me, Mademoiselle, you will forgive me for my intrusion before I shall forgive myself."

He moved towards the door, and lifted the curtains. His back was towards her, or he would have seen her lips frame the word, "Maurice," before she turned and disappeared through the curtains. When Denalguez looked around, she was gone, and he, too, went out by the opposite door. As he did so, Mr. Wurmsley came bustling into the room by the door through which Marion had made her escape, and then an excessively funny thing happened.

The *portières* over the other door at the end of the room, parted, and Thello Marsden smiling, *insouciante*, as ever, stepped into the room. To the reader, who is beginning to know Thello almost as well as the writer, it is not necessary to say that she had been an interested observer of the whole of the scene which was just completed. The two confronted one another.

"Surely," said Mr. Wurmsley, as he greeted her, "that was Captain Denalguez' voice. Where is he? Marion, too, where is she? Marion!" he called, moving towards the door.

Thello interposed. "Are you calling Marion?" she said ingenuously, "I have just

sent her to find something for me. She will be back in a moment."

"Good," returned the old gentleman. "My dear Mrs. Marsden, you are so kind and unceremonious to come in so early. Why, you are like one of my own children."

"That is very nice of you to say," returned Thello; "but why don't you kiss your eldest daughter?"

"My youngest, I protest," returned old Wurmsley delightedly, as he stooped down and kissed the cheek that Thello turned up to him as she stood on tiptoe for the purpose.

"I told you," continued she, "that though I could not dine with you, I would come in for the reception, and I am quite half an hour too soon for that, but I thought we could have a game of piquet. You beat me so shamefully the last time we played."

"It is charming of you," returned the old gentleman, "to think of an old man. I wish you had dined with us. My son-in-law was very late, he has only just gone to dress, now. Do you know, I cannot imagine why Edith is so strange and nervous. We insisted on her lying down. It was nonsense, her trying to go through dinner, and she consented. Do you know, I want to thank you for your help. Frankly, if you had not been clever enough to have seen Sir Reginald Faithorne's atten-

tion to Marion, and had not told me that you were sure she cared for him, I should have been puzzled what answer to give him this morning. Much as I desire that my daughter in marrying should attain rank and position I should never think of sacrificing her happiness to my pride. Thanks to you, however, my dear Mrs. Marsden," and he took her hand with much paterfamiliality, "I was prepared. Girls are extraordinary creatures! Dear me, dear me! I never should have guessed from Marion's manner that she cared for Faithorne. Ah, well, well! a man who is left with a daughter to marry off, is a pretty helpless specimen of humanity."

Old Wurmsley's gentle babble was interrupted by the entrance of a servant, with a packet which he carried upon a salver.

"Some letters," said he, "that Mr. Warburton's servant has just brought, thinking they may be important."

"Place them on the table in the library," said the master of the house, "and bring coffee. And now, my dear Mrs. Marsden, if you will pardon me, I have some business papers to get ready before Faithorne comes."

He went to the door, and left the room as Thello answered, "Why, of course. Here is Edith—are you better?" she added, address-

ing the latter who had just entered the room, and sank into an arm-chair.

"I wish I had died this afternoon," said Edith. "Upon my honor, I do. How am I to stop this scandal?"

"Which scandal?" asked Ethel innocently.

"How can you ask?" returned Edith. "This abominable marriage. It cannot be—it shall not be! but what can I do?"

Ethel looked at her for a moment with her pretty head on one side, and then she replied, in her clear, incisive tones.

"Wait for about an hour until there are plenty of people here, and then confess. It would be just like you to choose such a moment for your repentance; it would place so many people in an awkward position. It is always good to have as large a crowd as possible to witness one's domestic smash."

"But there is no time to lose," replied Edith, not noticing Ethel Marsden's sneer. "Oh, to think," she continued, rising, "that Marion should be made the victim of the revenge *he* has chosen."

"There is no reason she should be regarded as a victim," replied Ethel, delicately licking the tip of her finger, and applying it in little dabs to her fan, to repair some imaginary tear. "Her position will be far better

than yours. Faithorne is rich, young, popular, clever, and it is quite possible that he is very fond of her—”

“Oh, for pity’s sake, stop! It drives me mad to hear you talk of this marriage as possible.”

“You are too sensitive, my dear. When Faithorne told me last night that he was going to propose for Marion, it struck me as the best way possible to end all suspicion about you.”

Edith sprang to her feet. “And you think that I will buy my peace at such a cost? Good heavens, Thello!”

“I know, of course, that it must wound your vanity to find Faithorne in love with your sister, but the fact remains. That a man should prefer openly to adore a beautiful and innocent young girl to secret interviews, at imminent risks, with a married woman, is a peculiar taste, of course—but it exists, nevertheless.”

“You say that he is in love with her—and she—? is she not to be considered?”

“Certainly,” replied Thello, in the same tone as before. “But are you quite sure she will dislike this marriage so much? Have you any reason to suppose that it will be in any way repugnant to her?”

Edith had dropped into her chair again.

"There has been little confidence between us lately," said she drearily. "God help me, I cannot tell what is best."

"That, my dear," observed Thello, "is a self-evident proposition, or you would see that this marriage is a special providence for you, and you had better think seriously before you break it off."

"What you suggest is infamous."

"To put it plainly, my dear Edith, because Faithorne has been—well, let us say 'attentive,' in his manner to you, you have construed his feeling into something deeper. Believe me, he has been no more devoted to you than he has been and is, to me, for periods of about two months in every year; but I know how to estimate his nonsense, and you do not. You choose to take for earnestness his 'man of the world gallantry,' which means positively nothing. Of course I am assuming your flirtations to be as harmless as mine. Perhaps I am assuming too much."

Edith was sitting, looking at her from under her brows. She was silent for a moment, and then she said gravely, "Philip was right about you."

Thello threw back her head, and put both her pretty feet straight out in front of her upon a foot-stool, as she shut her fan with a snap and grinned softly.

"You make me feel my own unworthiness, sweet Edith," said she, "and I would not further contaminate you by a moment of my company if this were your house, but I think I shall have an amusing evening later on, and I do not mean to miss it. However," and she rose to her feet, "there is no need for me to bore you with a tête-à-tête, so fare thee well for the moment, my best friend and pupil," and Thello, humming some little snatch from some French opera or other, passed through the *portières* into the adjoining room.

"Who can I ask for counsel," thought Edith miserably, "and why did I ever ask it of her? She was right in one thing, however, it will never do to speak to-night. Marion may refuse Faithorne, after all. I will wait until to-morrow, I can decide that much at once." She was about to pass into the library when her father entered the room.

"Ah, there you are," said he, cheerfully, "let me look at you. Are you feeling better? Not much, eh?"

"Yes, yes," returned Edith, "I am much better. Father," continued she, "were you not very much surprised at Sir Reginald Faithorne's proposal?"

"Well," returned the old gentleman, "not altogether surprised. He has been here so

much lately that when he asked me, I wondered that I had not expected it. What other reason could bring him here so often?"

Edith was fidgeting nervously with a tassel, as she replied, "But is his reputation altogether what you would wish?"

"Oh," returned Mr. Wurmsley, easily, "I dare say he has been credited with a good deal more than he deserves, and will probably make a very good husband. If, as they say, he has been a bit wild, he will be the more ready to settle down."

"So you are satisfied?"

"My dear, I am more than satisfied. I have nothing, absolutely nothing left to wish for. You children have been very little trouble to me—have made splendid matches, and I am proud of you both. I should be hard to please if I were not satisfied."

He crossed over to the window, as Edith leaned back in her chair.

"I must wait," said she to herself.

A servant entered the room with coffee at this moment, and Marion coming in at the same time began to serve her father. She was so employed when Philip Warburton entered the room. Had his wife turned her head in his direction she would have seen at once that something was amiss. Philip Warburton was deadly pale, his lips were tightly

clenched, and a strong furrow between his brows betrayed the fact that he was prey to some unwonted emotion.

It was mechanically that he took his coffee cup from Marion, and sat down near his father-in-law. Edith threw him a casual glance. He was sitting with his back towards her, and she said,

“You look worn out,—had a tiring day?”

“Yes,” returned Warburton. “I have been much occupied all day, and I have just heard some bad news.”

“Ah,” said Wurmsley, “those letters that your servant brought?”

“Yes.”

“Can you not forget your bad news for tonight?” said Edith.

“I am sorry I sent those letters to you, now,” said Mr. Wurmsley, “for whatever it is, you can do nothing on the spot, and the knowledge of their contents will dispirit you. I hope that Captain Denalguez will be here early, I did all I could to make him come tonight, I even called upon him personally, but he seemed uncertain.”

“Oh,” said Edith, “I shall be glad if he stays away, though I persuaded him to come for your sake. He might as well be here, however—you will be regretting him all the evening, so his absence won’t benefit me much.”

"You are mistaken," said Warburton with deadly emphasis. "My regrets will be for another friend. I am meditating how to help him."

"What is his position?" said Mr. Wurmsley.

Warburton rose.

"He is a husband," said he, "who has been deceived. I will state the case, and you—all of you—" and he looked from his wife to his father-in-law, "shall give me your opinion."

Edith was obviously uneasy.

"Perhaps you forget," said she, "that Marion is here?"

"I am sure," said Mr. Wurmsley, "Philip is not likely to say anything that she may not hear."

Philip Warburton went on.

"There will be a scandal, but justice must be done."

"I do not care for such stories," said Edith.

"You have suddenly become very sensitive," said her husband.

"I don't see why we should be bothered with other people's troubles."

"Listen," said Warburton, "and you will see. My friend married a woman with whom he was desperately in love. Gradually this husband was forced to the knowledge that his

wife did not return his love. For a time he fought against his convictions until, try as he would, he could do so no longer. Of course a man does not see the light of his life die out without retaining some hope that it will live again. So with him—a faint, small hope would still creep in."

He paused a moment, and Mr. Wurmsley put in,

"Perhaps he was too suspicious in his disposition."

Edith was getting more and more anxious. She even seemed on the point of speaking to arrest her husband's words, but with a forbidding gesture he silenced her as he proceeded.

"He would not be discouraged. She was young, and he hoped that time with his patience and kindness, would bring a change. It did. She began by being irritable and faithful, she ended by being amiable and unfaithful."

Every one turned and looked at him as he spoke.

"She rewarded his devotion with treachery, and he only needed proof."

"Ah! there is the difficulty," put in Mr. Wurmsley.

"Which he suddenly and unexpectedly obtained," said Warburton.

"What has he done?" queried his father-in-law.

"Nothing yet. It is so grave a matter that one cannot be too careful. Now for your advice; the youngest first—Marion, in his place, what would you do?"

"I would forgive," said Marion, looking up from where she sat at her father's feet, "in the hope that repentance and gratitude might inspire what all else had failed to awaken."

"And you, sir?" said Warburton to Mr. Wurmsley, who was regarding the proceedings with a mild air of astonishment.

"Oh," broke in Marion, "it is Edith's turn to advise."

"I would not say a word in such a matter," said Edith, rising, "don't ask me."

"You say—" said Warburton to Mr. Wurmsley, as before.

"I—er—I—" began Mr. Wurmsley, "should just take her back to her parents—or friends. I should make them judge between us. I should say, 'See, the seed has blossomed, the fruit is ripe,—pluck it!'"

"Good!" exclaimed Warburton, "you have judged!"

Every one rose.

"What do you mean?" said Mr. Wurmsley.

"I say that you have judged, and I return

her to you, for I am the man, and the woman is your daughter."

"Listen to me," said Edith. "Have you no mercy?"

"Do not let me look at you."

"You might have asked—"

"Asked!" echoed the man.

"It is not as you say!"

Warburton turned upon her. "And your lover," he exclaimed, "have you forgotten him since yesterday? Here are the proofs," continued he, turning to Mr. Wurmsley, and handing him a packet of letters. "Her letters to the man."

Mr. Wurmsley took them as if in a dream, and Philip Warburton, turning to all present, said: "Justice is done. Now to avenge myself. There is one man too many on the earth." He started for the door, and Mr. Wurmsley stopped him.

"Stay—stay—" said he. "I cannot believe it. You say these letters are your proofs. Who is the man? There must be some mistake." He feverishly undid the packet. "I cannot see," said he. "Read them."

Warburton let fall the letters, retaining in his hand a single slip, which he read as he crushed it in his hand and flung it to the earth :

"I return your letters, but I keep your peace of mind. Reginald Faithorne."

As he spoke the name, it was echoed by a servant, who threw back the *portières* and announced,

"Sir Reginald Faithorne."

Warburton walked up to him before Mr. Wurmsley could interpose, and as the unsuspecting baronet extended his hand as if to greet him, a sharp noise echoed through the room. Philip Warburton had slapped Sir Reginald smartly on both sides of the face.

Faithorne, thunderstruck for the moment, raised his arm as if to strike back, then catching sight of the women and remembering himself, he drew back a step, and indicating the ladies by a wave of the hand, bowed ceremoniously to every one in the room. Then he turned on his heel and left the house. The only member of the group left behind who seemed to realize the scene that had taken place, was Thello Marsden, who, standing in an artistic attitude half hidden by the *portières* leading into the library, had watched the entire sequence of occurrences, and grinned maliciously as the curtains fell over her retreating figure.

CHAPTER XIII.

MIDWAY between Calais and Ostend lies a little fishing village, half hidden in thickly grown woods. Once beyond the confines of the village itself, one loses one's self at once in a tangle of woodland greenery, where the earth is hidden by the thick growth of the underwood, as the skies are hidden by the interlacing of the branches overhead. Even that observant person known to the makers of guide-books and romances as the traveller, could easily mistake these woodlands for primeval forests, were it not for the continual intersection of alleys which seem to have been cut through the brushwood by countless generations of wayfarers. Several of these alleys led to—converged towards a clearing in the brushwood, covered with soft, green grass. The patch is of about half an acre in extent, and it is occupied on this warm August morning by four men.

They present a peculiar spectacle, taking into consideration the hour and the nature of the locality. All four are dressed precisely alike, that is to say, from head to foot in the

most immaculate black, and their black frock coats and tall hats, standing out against the surrounding verdure, convey the impression of a conclave of legal crows.

The men are Philip Warburton, Maurice Denalguez, a young English friend of Warburton's, resident in Ostend, and the fourth, who is the senior of the party by at least a score of years, is recognizable at first glance by a certain grim calmness of manner, to be a doctor.

"Well," said Denalguez, as the four arrived upon the scene by one of the alleys through the brush, "we are here first at any rate. Pretty place, isn't it?"

"Yes," returned Philip Warburton, calmly.

"Are you quite decided what you are going to do about it?" queried Denalguez.

"Perfectly," replied Warburton. "My mind was made up long before I claimed and asked this favor of you."

"And what, then," said the young Englishman, "is to be the termination of this duel?"

Philip Warburton turned to him with a smile, as he said, "Possibly my death, but probably his."

"Ah, it is serious then?"

"Very serious. If I should fall," said Warburton, turning once more to Denalguez,

"you will take me home to Edith. If he should fall, I will carry the news myself. If by any mischance both of us leave this place alive, remember, gentlemen, that to-day's meeting is entirely between ourselves—a matter that never occurred."

"Come, come," put in the doctor at this point, an old friend of Philip Warburton's who, much against his will and against his own convictions of what was right and what was wrong, had consented to cross the Channel with his friend and Denalguez to minister to Philip in case his ministrations should be needed. "Do not talk in this horrible way. Your honor has been compromised, my dear Philip, and though it is barbarous and old-fashioned and ridiculous and unsatisfactory, you are quite right in seeking to have it avenged. But what the deuce!—you are not going to kill one another. Think of the scandal—"

"Yes," said Warburton, interrupting him sharply, "think of the scandal! I have thought of nothing else since it occurred."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders and turned on his heel.

"There they are," he said, pointing across the clearing as four similarly black figures arrived upon the scene.

The four new-comers, headed by Sir Regi-

nald Faithorne, walked briskly across the glade one behind another, and Warburton and his three companions advanced to meet them in the same order. In the middle of the clearing they met, and stood in a row; facing one another, when with one mechanical movement every man removed his hat and saluted his *vis-a-vis* gravely. It was like some grim figure in a dance of death.

This formality over, the two principals turned their backs upon each other, and retired about twenty paces. Denalguez and Sir Reginald's principal second advanced towards one another and Denalguez spun a sovereign in the air for choice of position. Sir Reginald's second won, and Denalguez rejoined Philip, who was buttoning up his coat, turning up his collar, and drawing his cuffs up out of sight under his sleeves.

Meanwhile the two other seconds had gone through the formality of examining and loading the pistols; and the two doctors, whilst they leisurely fumbled in their pockets for the keys of the two ominous looking cases they had brought with them, fraternized with the air of two men accidentally thrown together under distressing circumstances, which do not concern them personally.

The preliminaries being arranged, the two principals were placed back to back, and a pis-

tol was given to each, which he held in the orthodox manner, with his elbow bent, the muzzle pointing to the sky. Even the trees seemed to hush their murmuring in deference to the drama of life and death that was proceeding beneath them.

The seconds retired, and Denalguez said in a low and distinct voice,

“Are you ready?”

The word “Yes” came simultaneously from both men. Warburton’s short and incisive, Faithorne’s languidly drawled.

“You will each walk ten paces as I count,” proceeded Denalguez, “and at the tenth, you will turn and fire. One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—nine—*ten!*”

Faithorne’s second had won the toss for choice of position, and consequently Faithorne walked towards the sun and turning to fire, turned his back upon it; Philip walked in the opposite direction, and turning at the end of his ten paces, encountered the full glare of the morning brightness full in his eyes, and upon his pistol barrel. Nevertheless his aim was fairly true, and when the smoke of simultaneous reports cleared away, Faithorne was lying on the ground. Philip stood looking at him as if he could hardly realize exactly what had happened.

“Captain Denalguez,” said Sir Reginald’s

second, approaching that gentleman, "you doubtless observed that my principal fired in the air."

"Yes, damn him!" returned Maurice Denalguez; and then, as the four seconds gravely saluted one another, Philip Warburton and his three companions left the field.

An hour later Sir Reginald Faithorne was carried into the inn at Roche-Mairie, and at the same moment, Philip Warburton and Maurice Denalguez, accompanied by the man of medicine, boarded the train for Calais.

"Why did you not kill him?" said Denalguez.

"It was the sun," answered Philip Warburton.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE summer and the autumn were spent when our story reopens. Reopens in one of those little houses beloved by bachelors and young housekeepers, in Lower Eaton place, where Edith Warburton had hidden herself after that night that already seemed so long ago, that night when Philip had read in the drawing-room at her father's and had seemed to confirm Faithorne's message to her, "I return your letters, but I keep your peace of mind."

Edith sat in the boudoir which she had fitted up with such of her own belongings as she had brought from Wimbledon—sat in a listless attitude in a low arm-chair before the fire. To her own troubles she seemed by this time to have become thoroughly accustomed, and a new anxiety was filling her mind at the moment that we see her.

Her mind was occupied with her sister Marion, who had announced her definite intention of becoming a sister of mercy in an institution of ministering angels in the far east of the city, and no prayers or entreaties seemed able to turn her from her decision.

"Poor Marion," thought Edith. "She seems cheerful, but I cannot bear to think of her leaving the world in such a manner. It is little better than a convent, that she goes into, and I dare not say a word. What argument of mine could influence her? She could so justly answer me with the example of my past. What use have I made of my life that I should presume to direct hers? What an example have I been to her! It seems years since I saw her, and yet it is only months. But I shall see her now, perhaps; that is to say, if she comes to say good-by in answer to my entreaty. Oh, if I had only dreamed what my waywardness would have cost me, how different the world would have been to us all."

She sank into a reverie of forgetfulness, which was interrupted half an hour later by the entrance of Marion herself. The sight of the pale young face surrounded by the white and black draperies that all but concealed the golden hair, struck Edith with a sense of horrible contrast. The last time she had seen her sister, it had all been so different. Her resolution was not then made, and Edith had been taken to the south of France by her father, in the hope that change of air and of scene might have a beneficial effect upon her stunned senses. When she returned, Marion

was already in the east, working with the sisterhood that she was now about to join.

Edith rose, and going to her, exclaimed,

"You have come in answer to my wish—in answer to my prayers! How good of you!"

"It was not good of me," replied the child-nun gravely and sweetly, "I wished to come and see you again, for we may not meet for so long, and besides, I want you to come to the Church to-day. I want you to be there when I am received into the sisterhood."

"You are to enter your new life to-day?"

"Yes. If you come quietly, no one would be any the wiser, and I shall be so much happier—"

"But, child," broke forth Edith impetuously, "don't talk so. It is dreadful. You must know that this new existence upon which you are about to enter seems like death—a living death, to those who love you."

"That is because they do not understand," returned Marion, gravely. "The life I leave is one sad memory, full of cruelty and disappointment; of shattered faith, and of foolish hopes which were but dreams. The life I begin to-day is one full of sweet realities, one made up of pure and steadfast ideals. Be sure, sweet sister of mine, that I shall be happy in my choice."

There was silence for a few moments between the sisters, and then Edith said,

"Tell me, Marion, if you do not mind going back for a few moments before you forget the past forever—why did you refuse to marry Maurice Denalgez?"

The young face hardened as the reply came slowly,

"Because I could not have been happy with him, nor he with me. Don't let us talk about my affairs that are over, for I must go very soon. Tell me, have you seen Philip?"

"No," replied Edith. "All that part of my life seems to be a blank. I know that he and Sir Reginald Faithorne fought, and that Sir Reginald was wounded, seriously, they say—that much I have gathered."

"Yes," said Marion, thoughtfully, "and they all say that he behaved wonderfully well after that night. He would not fire at Philip, and they say he might easily have killed him, had he chosen. He has been away ever since, has he not?"

"Don't speak of him," said Edith, rising. "It brings back my past that I would rather forget if I can. It reminds me, too, of the past further off than that, before I knew him when I was so happy. Don't remind me of it."

"But I want to remind you of it," insisted

the child. "Do you think that I can be happy, knowing your trouble? I will never believe that you were wilfully wicked, and you may be quite sure that I never believed you did wrong."

Edith gave her a grateful hand pressure as she answered,

"And your child heart told you truer than the heads that called me guilty. I deserved to be thought the worst of—I was such a fool! I should like you to go to the altar with your mind and heart free from the burden I have brought to you. I will not try to exonerate myself from blame, but from sin. They told me—my friends I mean—I should be laughed at, if I didn't flirt as the rest. I was led away, step by step, through the fear of ridicule, till I told lies and deceived my husband to hide my folly. As each lie brought its multitude I was overwhelmed. But—there I stopped. To what end? Here am I alone, deserted by all but you. After that fearful night when Philip cast me off, I thought I could kill him for believing me guilty; but as time went on I knew I had given him every reason to believe the worst of me."

Marion put her arms round her sister as she asked,

"Why did not you defend yourself?"

"Because appearances were so terribly against me. I was utterly dazed at first to find he had those letters. I had destroyed all of them in the morning. Where those he had came from, I cannot imagine. It was all so sudden. Then when I came to myself, I thought he had judged me too hastily, and I felt bitter resentment. I was almost glad at the pain I knew he must suffer—forgetting his patience and my folly. Afterwards when I came to my senses, I feared him. Besides, what proof had I? A man never understands that a woman can commit any folly—may lie as I did, but will still hesitate to raise the fatal barrier. It is impossible to make a man believe this—oh, if regrets could expiate! I am so penitent!"

"Write and tell Philip so."

"I cannot. Do not ask me. Forget what I said except for the comfort it may give you. I am convinced if he had had any love or mercy in his heart, he would have spoken before this."

And Edith let her head drop on Marion's shoulder. It was pathetic to see this woman sheltered in the arms of this young girl. She whispered soothingly, as to a wayward child.

"Then let *me* tell him."

"No," said Edith, "you must promise me not to speak of me at all, till I am dead—

promise. All I want is for you to know that you may still kiss me, for I still have the right to kiss you."

"Darling!" and the two sisters were locked in one another's arms.

When they had recovered themselves a little, Marion glanced at the clock, and Edith following her glance, said,

"Yes, yes,—I know. You must go now? Good-by, and God bless you," and after a last kiss the two sisters parted.

Edith Warburton paced up and down the room a few times after her sister had gone. Finally she seated herself at the writing table, and tried to write. Hastily rising again, she went to the window.

"I cannot write," she said. "Why did she speak of Philip? I dare not write; but still, if I were quite sure that he would listen, I should like—but why should I think he cares for me any longer?"

She sank wearily into a chair, and her next conscious thought was one of the grim irony of circumstance, as a servant drew back the *portière* and announced, "Mrs. Marsden and Mrs. Beaufoy."

That Edith was surprised, is to use a miserably inadequate form of words, but she rose as if mechanically to meet and greet her visitors.

"Well, stranger," was Ethel Marsden's greeting, as she dropped into a chair by the fire opposite to Edith, and Clare Beaufoy took her seat between them.

"It is you who are the stranger," returned Edith, "for this is certainly a most unexpected pleasure. You could not expect to see me, since I have been away, and I have been very quiet since I returned. It is good of you to come and cheer up my loneliness."

"Oh," replied Ethel, airily, "I am not unforgiving, and besides it is interesting to note the effect upon an artless mind, of such a cataclysm as you have been through with that extraordinary husband of yours. I should have come before had I been able to."

"So should I," said Clare Beaufoy, "I have been intending to come day after day, but I have been so dreadfully busy. I have had five balls already this week which I had to go to."

"And I," echoed Ethel, "have had a house full of visitors, it seems to me, every day and all day."

"You receive—you go to the balls, all of them?" said Edith, looking from one to the other. "You are happy enough—"

"And you look more wretched than ever," said Clare.

"I have good cause," said Edith. "My

sister has just left me, and I shall not see her again, perhaps for years. Poor little Marion ! with her last good-by she asked me to write to Philip."

"To your husband ?" exclaimed Clare.

"What ?" exclaimed Ethel.

"Just as I expected," remarked Mrs. Beaufoy, complacently, stretching out her dainty toes and burrowing in the rugs with her feet. "He sent her, of course. Don't you see that he is more in love with you than ever ; that he is thoroughly penitent, and only looking for the slightest pretext on which to make peace ?"

"Do you really think so ?" said Edith Warburton eagerly. "I only pray that it may be so. I cannot go on living this ugly life all alone. What shall I do ?"

"What a fool you are," said Ethel, "to worry yourself about the future ! There is nothing but pleasure and freedom in store for you if you care to take it."

"Perhaps," said Edith reflectively, looking into the fire, "you would not see it any more than I do, were you situated as I am. Do you think you would like this ? Look around you. How would you like this after the homes I had ?"

"Well," said Clare, "it is your own fault that you are here. Why did you not stay at

your father's after the row? There was nothing to prevent you."

"Do you think," said Edith, with a shudder, "that I would live in the same house with Marion after that night? Heaven knows I had done her injury enough. I would not live there, but if my father had only spared me his reproaches I might have seen more of Marion, and perhaps have prevented her sacrificing herself to-day." She paused for a moment, and then continued, staring into the fire, "I have never understood her refusal of Maurice Denalquez. There is some mystery in it, I am sure. Even just now, when I asked her why she refused him, she evaded the question. I may be morbid, but I cannot help accusing myself of being in some way the cause of this resolution of hers—of her seeking this death in life."

"Well," said Thello, smoothing her muff with one finger of her gloved hand, "I can relieve your mind of that burden. I have seen a good deal of your sister lately, and she has never been so happy as she has been since she decided on taking this step that makes you so miserable. I can assure you that much as Marion has thought of you, you have had nothing to do with her determination."

"Would that I could believe it."

"By the by," said Clare Beaufoy, "is there anything that I can do for you? I have been most anxious to see you to explain a thing which must have appeared strange. Of course I should like to have asked you to visit us, but I was afraid it might be a little awkward for you. My husband is so tiresome about that kind of thing. He is very indulgent, but he will not let me ask a woman who is separated from her husband to the house."

"And I," said Ethel, "am even worse off than Clare in that respect. Living alone as I do, it would compromise what shreds of reputation I have left if the heroine of the celebrated Faithorne-Warburton scandal were to be seen constantly at my poor little house. So you see, my dear, it has not been my fault that we have not met oftener."

"There is no need of any explanation," said Edith coldly, "I do not go out at all. Strange," continued she reflectively, "that you who taught me—goaded me—to defy my husband's wishes, should be so careful to comply with the wishes of your own, and to square your behavior with the lightest expression of the world's opinion. Surely it is scarcely practising what you preach."

"Goodness me," said Ethel. "Why, any one would say that I had persuaded you to leave your home."

"Well, well," said Edith wearily, "we will not speak of the past, and if I seem changed and imbibited, it is only that I have neither the power nor the inclination to conceal the truth. I have had time to think in the last few months, and many things are clear to me now."

"Well," said Clare, getting up, "at any rate I do hope you quite understand why I have not been to see you before. I must run away now. By the by, Thello, don't forget that an old friend of yours is coming to tea with me this afternoon. Mind you are not late. Good-by, Edith, be sure to let me know if I can do anything for you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Beaufoy," said Edith in the same tone, "I have all that is necessary."

And Clare, with a little shrug of her fur-clad shoulders, made a little mischievous *move* at Thello, who grinned in reply, and left the room.

There was a short, awkward pause, and then Ethel remarked,

"By the by, I shall see your people tonight. Is there any message—any question—for them? Anything you want to know about them?"

"There is one question I should like to ask," said Edith, "have you ever heard how or where Philip got those letters? I had

burned the letters myself just before you came into Captain Denalguez's rooms that day—the whole packet, which Sir Reginald had just given me."

"I have never heard it explained," said Thello audaciously, "but I have no doubt that the whole thing could be traced to Captain Denalguez himself. Did it never strike you as a peculiar coincidence that we found Sir Reginald with him that morning? I suspected mischief at once, and if you had said anything about those letters then, I might have helped you; but it is so long ago that it will be difficult to associate it with him now. There is one person, however, who might help you."

"Who?"

"Faithorne. I hear he returned some days ago."

"You forget what you are saying," said Edith, rising.

As she did so, her servant brought in a note which she read hastily.

"Marion wishes to see me at once. What can she have to say? Listen,—she says, 'Come back in the carriage. I will not keep you five minutes. It is my last request. Marion.' I must go, Ethel. Give me my hat and cape, Sarah."

"I have to be off, too," said Ethel. "I

have to meet a friend at Clare's. I will come in again to-morrow and find out what has transpired, when we can decide better what is to be done in the future."

The two women left the house together, Edith in Mr. Wurmsley's carriage, which had come to meet her, and Thello in a hansom which deposited her at Clare Beaufoy's door in Ebury Street.

"My work is ended," said the little arch-conspirator to herself as she threw off her wraps and settled herself in one of Clare's lounges.

Clare had not returned, and probably had no intention of doing so, so Thello proceeded to make herself perfectly comfortable with her reflections and a cigarette.

"And by the by," continued she, apostrophizing her boots, "it is not completed a moment too soon. I could not have prevented explanations much longer. I have kept away from Edith too long for safety, I think; but, however, she fortunately never had sense or pluck enough to send for Denal-guez. He might have enlightened her a good deal about those letters, but I knew she would not think of him."

At this point her cogitations were cut short by the lifting of a *portière* which disclosed Sir Reginald Faithorne, looking at her with a

sweet and cynical smile upon his handsome face.

Thello, without moving, greeted him with the first couplet of Costa's song,

“Beau chevalier, qui partez pour la guerre,
Qu' allez vous faire,—si loin d'ici—”

To which musical accompaniment he entered, and shaking her by the hand sat down opposite to her on the other side of the fireplace.

“Well, *beau chevalier*,” said Thello, “what brings you here? The last place in the world you would be expected to choose for a *rendezvous*.”

“I have come in search of information which I knew that either you or Clare would give me. I want to hear something of the history of the Wurmsley family since my departure. I suppose, however, I need only have come straight to you.”

“*Quid pro quo!*” responded Ethel, “I want to know some things too. Yours for mine?”

“It is a bargain. Ladies first, however; you always commanded me, continue to do so now.”

“First, why didn't you shoot Warburton?”

“Good gracious, why should I? He had not injured me, there was not a reason in the world why he should die excepting your wish,

and you forgot to lay that injunction upon me. Now look here, Thello, don't let us chaff any more, but tell me something: how was it that when Edith had burned her letters in the afternoon—I saw her burn them—Warburton produced apparently a duplicate set in the evening?"

"You *saw* her burn them?"

"Yes."

"Did she count them?"

"No, she merely glanced over them, and threw the whole bundle into the fire."

"That is exactly what I expected. Women are so careless with their correspondence! You know I am somewhat of a collector of autograph manuscripts—I selected two of the most interesting as worthy of my collection."

"Do you realize, Thello Marsden," said Faithorne, "that you place yourself in my hands absolutely when you tell me your secrets like this?"

Thello laughed.

"Oh, I am not afraid," said she merrily. "I know you are as bad as I am."

"You flatter me," said Faithorne, bowing gravely. "I really cannot take so much credit to myself. I feel that it is not due—"

"Your usual modesty, my dear Rex. Oh, you're a sweet thing!"

"Yes," assented Faithorne, "I *am* nice."

"I'm delighted to see you back," pursued Thello. "You are the only person that I can speak out to, and with all this on my mind, I have been so bottled up that I ache to tell the truth to somebody. It is a positive luxury."

"Why don't you indulge yourself oftener? It is not at all painful when you become accustomed to it."

"You are simply horrid!"

"Yes, but to continue. You have been strangely inconsistent, Thello. Your fixed plan on the day of the Warburton row was to secure my marriage with Marion. The same evening you overthrew that plan yourself. You upset the marriage and diverted your attention from Denalguez to Warburton; now if I may be permitted to ask a wholly irrelevant and ridiculous question—why?"

"Because I am a woman, and unfortunately cursed with a temper. Still there was more method in my madness than appears at first sight. As you very justly say, I determined that your marriage with Marion would suit me perfectly—"

"Thank you, Thello. It is nice to earn the approval of a great mind—"

"Don't interrupt. Just before you came in that night Edith aggravated me all to pieces, and I lost my temper, so I fired my little shot —otherwise the two interesting specimens

of Edith's hand-writing. They would not have been so effective had I not found by accident—that is the truth—a small note in your charming fist, saying—but you remember the words,—it was extremely useful. You saw the effect of the explosion. The bomb had been fired the moment before you entered. I think you experienced some of the after shock yourself."

"Yes," replied Faithorne sardonically, "I made a note of the scene, I remember. I also remember that I was unprepared for that *dénouement*, but I cannot recall any letters of Edith's that could produce such a scene. There was not the slightest cause for Warburton's marital indignation—you know that as well as I do."

"That is the charm of the whole thing," said Thello, leaning back luxuriously. "Imagine Philip Warburton's feelings when he knows that Edith is guiltless of anything but an idiotic romance, which taken in comparison with his present belief, he would be only too glad to pardon."

"Still," persisted Faithorne, "I don't see why he should be willing to accept such slender proof."

"Ah," said Thello, significantly, "you forget. Now you are able to judge dispassionately, take his side of the question. His wife

had been sufficiently imprudent in her manner to cause him considerable uneasiness, if not absolute suspicion. He is a much more sentimental man than would be imagined; so between wounded love and the suspicion aroused by Edith's folly, his mind was in no state to judge. He could only feel, and imagine that he knew. Then again, it was not so much Edith's letters as your unconsidered words that did the work. You never dreamed how important your small note would prove, did you? That is the advantage of a fine, crisp style. You hardly expected to make such a success as a writer, did you?"

"Perhaps," said Faithorne, who struggled between an amused and an angry sensation, that made him hesitate between kissing and slapping his interlocutor, "you made the success for me, if success it was. You are certainly right on one point; I never intended those few words which I sent with Edith's letters for any purpose beyond frightening her a little. Two more questions, and I shall know all that is necessary. Was it not a little difficult to prevent Marion and Denalguез coming to an understanding?"

"Yes, dreadfully difficult, and I should never have succeeded with any other girl. Strangely enough, the strength of her love for him made it easier to keep them apart. In

proportion to the height to which she had exalted him, was the depth to which he fell, when fall he did. That has been the only part of my work which has been distasteful to me, and I am very glad that it is ended to-day."

She rose, and walking to the fire kneeled down, spreading her hands to the blaze.

"How ended," said Faithorne.

"Marion becomes a bride to-day."

"What?" said Faithorne, rising and congratulating himself that his tormentor's back was turned to him. "Wedded to-day? And to whom?"

"To the Church," said Thello, looking in the fire.

"Great heavens!" Then changing his tone back to his former one of cynic half-amusement he continued,

"I thought I might be of some use, but it seems to me you could have done very well without me."

"Before I answer your final question," said Thello, sinking back upon her heels and giving a twist to her body so as to half face him, "I want to know why you take any further interest in the Wurmsley family. The whole adventure has been rather disastrous for you; the only luck you have had in the matter was your wound not proving fatal."

"My interest," said Faithorne, rising and

assuming the serious tone of a man who does not propose to allow his words to be ridiculed or his actions misconstrued, “is simply to discharge a debt of honor. When I returned to London the other day, I found that old Wurmsley had been financially crippled, temporarily, doubtless, but still sufficiently seriously. I supposed he would be burdened with the maintenance of Mrs. Warburton, whose scruples forbade her to stay in the house with Marion, and I felt it my duty to provide for Edith—silence! if you please, and let me finish—having been, without doubt, the cause of the separation. The difficulty was, to do this without her knowledge. Great caution was required, and that caution I employed. On making inquiry on my behalf, my agent found that provision was already made for her by—”

“Warburton, of course—”

“No, by Captain Denalguez. He cunningly contrived that her father, through whose hands the money passed, should believe that it *did* come from Warburton. Now I have told you the whole thing. Confidence for confidence. Tell me, why have you been so down on Denalguez? I am sure you don’t mind telling me?”

Thello was silent for a few moments, during which she paced twice up and down the room.

"Well," she said at last, "I will tell you, though I must fall in your estimation, as it involves the rather humiliating confession that instead of being the very original person that you and everybody else take me to be, I had, like the rest of my sex, a weak spot; and what annoys me more than anything else is that it was the simplest of all weaknesses—love."

"Not possible!" ejaculated Faithorne.

"Oh," continued Thello in the same tone, "it was a long time ago. I knew a man who was remarkable for the most perfectly beautiful disposition I ever came across—he was very handsome into the bargain. He was the poem of my whole existence. There was only one bar to our happiness,—I was married."

Faithorne jumped as if he had been shot and looked at her incredulously.

"Don't laugh," continued the woman, "I told you before I began, that my confession would disclose a secret. I had in this case some strong scruples and principles. I do not know what we hoped, but our dream was pure and untainted by any suspicion of an alloy. It was impossible to know Prosper Denalguez and think of wrong. Though there seemed no end or aim to our dream, that was the hour of the supremest happiness I have ever known in my life. All went well till Captain Denalguez came back from abroad.

He chose to think that I should ruin the boy—God only knows how much nearer the boy came to being my ruin ! Maurice Denalguez set to work to poison his brother's mind. He succeeded, not in winning him from me, but in ending our dream—the boy shot himself."

She covered her face with her hands, and a strong shudder shook her. Faithorne, moved despite himself, rose, and laying his hand upon her head, smoothed back her hair, as he said :

"Poor Thello—poor little girl."

"Thanks," she said, as she took his hand and pressed it. Then she continued.

"Maurice Denalguez considers me the cause of his brother's death. I consider him his brother's murderer. Perhaps we share the responsibility. I expiated my part in the crime—tragedy—call it what you will—and he shall expiate his. That is our feud. And as he has robbed me of my love, so I have robbed him of his."

"So you, too, had a heart," said Faithorne with a half return of his old manner. "I thought you were born without such an incumbrance."

"It may have been so," said Thello, wearily. "It is probable that Prosper Denalguez, out of *his* great good heart, made mine. One

thing, however, is certain," said she, tossing back her tawny head and recovering herself as she put another cigarette between her lips and proceeded to light it at the mantel-piece, "that I have none left, so respect me once more."

"Thanks for a very interesting story," said Faithorne, rising. "Though as you say, it is not original and rather destroys your individuality."

"Rather, but not quite. I am myself now."

"Well," said Faithorne, crossing the room and taking up his hat, "you are so fascinating that I forget time in your presence. I must be off, for I am very busy."

"Busy? What about?"

"Some private theatricals I am going to arrange. I shall make you take a part."

"What sort of a part?"

"Oh! a bad part."

"Very well," returned Thello. "Good-by, come and tell me about it some other day," and Faithorne left the room.

She sank into the lounge as he left.

"To-day," said she to herself, "ends my self-imposed task, and to-morrow I shall bid a definite good-by to the Wurmsley family. Not a year ago Philip Warburton told me I was not good enough for his wife. I wonder what he thinks to-day?"

She gave a little laugh which ended in something suspiciously like a sob, as she concluded,

“And my year of planning and scheming brings me only weariness. Ah, well. Like all realizations, it is disappointing—disappointing.

CHAPTER XV.

THE following afternoon, true to her promise, whilst Edith sat in her rooms in South Eaton Place, Ethel Marsden broke in upon her.

"Well," said she, cheerily, as she entered, "what was it all about yesterday?"

"You may well ask," replied Edith, "there is much to tell; at last I know the cause of that child's retirement from the world. She has been driven to it; driven to it by a man's deception, and that man is Captain Denalguez."

Thello, anxious to know more before she committed herself, half turned her back as she deposited her cape upon a vacant chair, and Edith continued.

"You who have seen my sister so often must have known of her struggle between her love for him, and what she believes to be right. Can you tell me, Ethel, if she has ever sought, or if he has ever offered any explanation? She only told me of her reasons for refusing him, but how the knowledge came to her she would not say."

"I believe," replied Ethel, "that Marion was so convinced of Captain Denalguez's guilt that she refused to see him or in any way discuss the subject. He has not been a lucky friend of your family. If you remember, your troubles dated from his arrival."

"That is true," said Edith thoughtfully, "but why should he hate me? I had done nothing to rouse such a feeling."

"Oh, to do him justice," returned Ethel, "I think it was from a false idea of taking care of Warburton more than from any consideration of you, good, bad or indifferent. And then again, perhaps he thought that you had told Marion not to marry him."

"And so sought revenge?—it may be so—it may be so."

"By the by," said Ethel, "I have an idea that might be useful to you. Before I tell it I must ask a question. Do you care to say by whom your income is supplied?"

"Why," said Edith, wonderingly, "I thought you knew—by my father, of course."

"I am sorry to distress you," said Ethel, "but your father can scarcely keep himself. This is one of Marion's reasons for her decision. She saw but one alternative to being a burden upon him, and marriage—"

"But this is impossible! I have had more money than I needed. My father could not

have been so foolish,—he certainly would not have been delicate to such an extent as to rob himself, apart from the fact that he has all along sided with Philip, and has shown but little sympathy for me.”

“Your father allowed Warburton to provide your income—that is, he believed the money came from him, but Warburton was not so generous. Your luxuries have been supplied by Captain Denalguez.”

“What?”

“By Captain Denalguez.”

“Can you prove this?”

“Certainly, ask Faithorne. I saw him recently, and he said that for some mysterious reason or other, he was going to call upon you. I dare say that Denalguez felt that you were in some way dependent upon him.”

“Oh,” exclaimed Edith, indignantly, as she arose, “that I should have been snared into accepting anything from him. It seems as though my heart would break, and I am so helpless! Why can’t I work—work—work?”

“So you can,” said Ethel, “go on the stage. With your name and the associations connected with it, you would make a *furore*.”

“Don’t be absurd—I can’t act.”

“Of course not. You would not make any money if you could.”

“But I am so awkward.”

"The very reason why you would succeed. People nowadays go to the theatre to be amused; you could do that. Why, the girl who would play your maid would know more about acting than you are ever likely to know."

"Then why should they engage me?"

"Why, because you are a curiosity."

"But I might learn with study," said Edith as the idea took possession of her. "And I would work so hard. I might make my own fortune, or at least my own living. But my father—and my husband—what would they say?"

"Oh, well, continue to take the wages of Captain Denalguuez."

"Never! Tell me—how can I find out about going on the stage?"

"I have not the least idea now, but I will make inquiries for you if you like. You always dressed well — have you lots of clothes?"

"I suppose I should want a great deal of dress," said Edith thoughtfully.

Thello, seeing that Edith's head was turned the other way, grinned a little.

"It depends on the theatre, I imagine," she said laconically.

As Edith looked up as if for an explanation, the servant, opening the door, announced

Captain Denalguez. As he entered the room and saw Ethel Marsden, he stopped short. The two women were not less astonished than he, and finally he broke the silence, saying,

“I embarrass you by my entrance. Have I had the misfortune to interrupt any fresh combination?”

“No,” said Ethel, with an undisguised air of triumph. “Be reassured.”

“I am *not* reassured,” said Denalguez gravely. “Your very feebly disguised delight, the triumph in your face, shows me that I am no longer in your way.”

By this time Edith had recovered her self-possession.

“Captain Denalguez,” said she, “is it to exult over me that you are here?”

“Madame,” replied Denalguez, “my feeling is an altogether different one, as different as my object in being here. It is on your husband’s behalf that I have come.”

“You come from my husband?”

“As I should only detain you about five minutes, I am sorry my visit is inopportune. I will try to find you alone some day soon—or perhaps you—”

“Pray don’t let me drive you away,” said Ethel Marsden; “I am particularly anxious to see you myself, and with Edith’s permission, will run away now, and come back after

a while. You will not refuse me a few moments, Captain Denalguez, I am sure?"

"Certainly not," said Denalguez. "Only too charmed. I am still fond of studying human nature, and the material you provide is inexhaustible. I am still in search of knowledge."

He had moved to the door with her, and held it open. As she went out, she said:

"You shall obtain all you want in about ten minutes, I promise you. I shall be back soon, Edith."

Edith Warburton motioned her visitor to a seat, and seated herself, as she said:

"What does Mr. Warburton propose?"

"His proposal, if you call it so," said Denalguez in a matter-of-fact tone, "is simple."

A ray of hope illuminated Edith's face as she broke in eagerly—

"He regrets having been so harsh—I mean so cruel—"

"Er—not precisely; but a woman, in fact your sister spoke to him—pleaded for you. She feared your father would not long be able to protect you, and sought your husband's aid. He at once gave instructions to allow you—"

"That is enough! Captain Denalguez, it is not necessary for you to proceed. I intend to take no aid of the kind you suggest from

Mr. Warburton. He possesses but one kind of gift that I would accept, and *that* he does not offer. Before you entered I made up my mind to refuse all further help from my father. In future I shall depend upon my own exertions."

"May I ask how?" said Denalguez.

"I intend to act," said Edith, with a show of bravery that she was far from feeling.

"Your intentions," returned Denalguez, "may be excellent, but the acting I doubt. Surely you are not serious."

"Perfectly."

"But, my dear lady, do you suppose the theatre to be a training school for women like you? Only two kinds of women *without* talent can succeed; one who is *in* society, and one who has forfeited her right to be there. By a series of misfortunes you are no longer in society, but I know that you have not forfeited your right to be there."

As he spoke the last gleam of hope died out in Edith's heart. When he was silent, controlling herself with a violent effort, she said to him in a strangely altered voice,

"I must thank you, Captain Denalguez, for showing me how disastrous the work I had hoped to obtain, would prove. You have at least succeeded in showing me that I should only have made myself ridiculous. I might

possibly take heart of grace from the fact that you always mistrusted me. Perhaps if I had been brought up like other girls, it might have been different, but you know our mother died when we were quite children. Father did all he could for us, but what can a girl do without a mother's care? I grew up, I suppose, as selfish as they say I am. Every one flattered me and said I should make a great marriage, and when Philip Warburton came I was flattered by his proposal, by his wealth and by my promised position. Well, he gave me all he promised—more; but he was hard with me. I did not find in him the sympathy without which I cannot live. Even you, a stranger, almost, have pursued me as though I had done you some great injury—"

Denalguez silenced her with a gesture.

"Stop," said he, "you do me an injustice. *I pursue you?* Believe me, I did more to save you than I would ever have done for myself. I suffered insult, humiliation, even my own self-contempt."

Edith was about to speak when he motioned to her to keep silent once more.

"I would suffer so again," continued he, "to save Philip all that he has borne, and I would give much to know whose hand it was that struck the blow. My own plan was merely to show you how dangerous was the

path you had chosen, and I believe you would have been saved, which was the only object of my hopes. Fate, however, ordained that it should be otherwise."

He ceased speaking, and Edith on whom his words had evidently made a profound impression, said gently,

"Thank you. I fancy that if I had had a true friend, such as you have been to Philip, and, in these latter days, to me, my life might have been different."

Then with a change of manner, she continued,

"I have something to say to you that I cannot tell you now, I am too upset. It is not, however, about myself. As far as I am concerned, tell Mr. Warburton that I refuse his money."

She steadied herself as she spoke, grasping the back of a chair, and said as she moved to the door,

"I have a packet that has been entrusted to me for you. If you will wait a moment I will get it. You will wait, will you not?"

"With pleasure," and Denalguez was left alone.

Not for long, however, for almost as she left the room, Ethel Marsden entered it.

"You see I have come back to keep you

company," said she. "Am I not thoughtful? You don't seem very enthusiastic over it. If you remember, Captain Denalguez, the last *tête-à-tête* that we had you were warmer in your enthusiasm—more *empressé* in your attentions, though I did not then know the way to your heart as well as I do now."

"You know the way to my heart!" echoed Denalguez. "Never!"

"Do you feel inclined to bet about it?"

"No."

"You are wise, Monsieur, you would lose."

Maurice Denalguez did not attempt to conceal the disdain which he felt at the moment for the woman who sat before him, but nevertheless experienced the uncomfortable sensation that he was fighting against hidden weapons, and there seemed no means of making her show her hand.

"You know," pursued Thello, "I have only to say one word."

"Indeed," said Denalguez, "it must be a very terrible one."

"No," replied Thello, looking him straight in the eyes, "not very terrible—to you at any rate. It is simply the name of a pure, charming, innocent young girl—Marion."

In spite of himself, Maurice Denalguez started, and he half turned, so as to hide his face from her as she continued,

" You see I *do* know the way. You loved her very much, and it is your dream to wed her. Though she jilted you, your heart has remained with her. It is strange that such a weak little child should so enchain 'the Galahad,' Captain Maurice Denalogue—I might almost say 'the Don Quixote.' Well, well, you love her in spite of yourself, and she has contemptuously refused you. Do you know why? "

" I do not wish to discuss the matter," said Denalogue, " but she could have had but one reason,—that she did not love me."

" You are wrong," said Thello shortly.
" Her love is as deep as yours."

" Mrs. Marsden," said Denalogue, turning to her once more, " don't let us fence in this matter. What have you to say? There is some ingenious torture or other hidden beneath your information. You would not have told me of her love if you did not think you could sting me with the assurance. Speak."

" When you seek knowledge, you must do as all scholars should—walk before you run. Patience, my dear friend—patience! I have something to say as you justly suppose, but I am going to take my time. There were but two people in the world who knew Marion's reason for refusing you—one was Faithorne,

and you would not listen to him. The other is myself—will you listen to me?"

"Have at least the mercy to speak!"

"Marion loved you, and all the time that you were away she thought of nothing but your return. She had but one dream—to be your wife. That would have made *you* too happy—it would not have suited *me*. I had to make matters right. I thought of the worst things that I could say—and I said them."

As she said this, Edith appeared at the door, but the two were so engrossed with their conversation that they did not notice her entrance.

"And do you mean to say," said Denalguez, "that she could believe your—your lies?"

"Oh," said Ethel, in the tone of one giving a simple explanation, "it required, of course, a certain amount of ingenuity. I found a young girl, innocent, ignorant, stupid. A girl who had suffered a common fate, but who did not know the name of her betrayer. I agreed to take care of her on condition that she said whatever I told her to say. Marion, whose pity I enlisted for her, went to help and comfort her. The girl told her that the man who deceived and abandoned her had gone to Russia—was in the Embassy, and that his name was—Denalguez."

"Great God! No one but a child could have believed such a story. You chose your victim well!"

"You have had some evidence of Marion's obstinacy. Witness, for instance, her refusal to give you any satisfaction."

"I should like to kill you," said Denalquez calmly, looking her in the eyes.

"You sought for knowledge—take it. It was I who separated Edith from Philip Warburton. It was I who kept and sent him two of her letters, knowing that she was guiltless of all wrong. It was I who kept you and Marion apart, and to-day, Maurice Denalquez," and she rose and came close to him, "you have expiated your share in Prosper's death. I vowed you should, and I have kept my oath."

A groan behind them seemed almost a welcome diversion, as they both turned and saw Edith.

"And it was I," said she, as the two kept silence, "that brought this woman into communication with my sister. Oh," continued she, addressing Denalquez, "don't say that there is no hope. Can we not go to her?"

Denalquez drew himself up as he replied,

"You are right. This is your work. This woman," said he, pointing to Ethel, who stood like an avenging demon, her hand upon the

mantel-piece, "has ruined your sister's life as well as yours. You were warned against her. Did she lose one iota of her pleasure or position when she bade you defy those who loved and respected you? God forgive you for your share of to-day's work. As for you," continued he, fiercely, turning to Ethel Marsden, "don't imagine that your sex will protect you. Between us from this moment, it is war—without mercy—war to the knife. I warn you!"

"That is understood," said Ethel calmly. "You and I have played the game of vengeance for a long while. Sometimes the luck is in your favor, sometimes in mine. You should be too good a gambler to mind losing. You have held some good cards, but it is my turn now. You have lost me some cards, some diamonds, in the game, but I have taken your best card—a Heart. At last we are quits."

"I know now," said Edith, interrupting her, "how I have been a tool of this woman. Try to forgive me, for my agony is almost more than I can bear. Think what I must suffer, knowing myself to be the cause of such misery."

With the obvious truth of the words thus wrung from her, Maurice Denalguez softened in spite of himself.

"You must not plead to me, poor child," said he. "I must have been mad when I spoke to you just now. It is I who am the true cause of this—woman's—work. If she had but visited her cruelty on me alone; if she had but spared the rest of you."

As he finished speaking, and took Edith's hand in his, Sir Reginald Faithorne was announced.

Taking in the situation at a glance, he approached Edith and said as he bowed gravely to her,

"I see my entrance would be an intrusion if I had not a sure passport. Look up, at least, Mrs. Warburton, and tell me that I may try to earn my pardon for my share in this deplorable business?"

Edith remained silent, whilst Ethel, who had been quietly buttoning her gloves, looked up at him with a glance of keen anxiety. It was Denalguetz who broke the silence.

"Sir Reginald Faithorne," said he, "once by my pride I prevented your telling me what, had I listened, would have obviated all the distress that followed that meeting. This is no time for lengthy explanations. I ask you as man to man, for God's sake, end this suspense."

"Marion will return to her life in your world," said Faithorne, quietly.

"It cannot be," ejaculated Ethel Marsden.

Faithorne silenced her with a wave of his hand.

"She was led to take the step she decided on," continued he, "by a treachery, which unfortunately, cannot be properly punished, but the failure of the plot at the moment of success, will be a considerable blow, I think, to Mrs. Marsden."

Edith looked up at him eagerly.

"You would not say this only to comfort me," she said. "Are you sure of what you say?"

"Perfectly,—upon my honor. You may expect to see her here at any moment."

"Oh," said Edith, "I have prayed so for help, and it has come—has come from *you*, of all men in the world. Thank God!" and she turned and went to the window.

"Since when," said Ethel, with a little preparatory cough, "has Sir Reginald Faithorne become the defender of the good, the true and the beautiful?"

"Since you took the liberty of making me an unwilling accomplice in your infernal schemes," replied the baronet. "You were too clever yesterday, Mrs. Marsden. The open avowal of your malice would have sickened me, had I not at once determined to avert it if human power could achieve so

much. I sought the help of those whose help was all-powerful, and we succeeded in a very short time in crumbling your edifice of lies."

"Curse my tongue," said Ethel venomously, all the worst passions of her nature coming into her face as she spoke. "Your morality is delightful, Sir Reginald. I never saw any signs of it before, and I did not know you were gifted with such a troublesome thing."

"A man, however bad he is," returned he gravely, "has always enough of that troublesome thing to enable him to appreciate a good woman."

Ethel laughed.

"Curious that I never saw any of it until now," she said.

"Well, you see *you* hardly inspired it. I told you yesterday you were to play a part in my private theatricals, and I have kept my word. Your part is not a pleasant one, is it?"

"Well, if it comes to that, yours is not much better, though by the by, when you come to think of it, it is a comic part, is it not? You were always very sensitive to ridicule. It seems to me that the Wurmsley family have made you a greater fool—have made you more utterly ridiculous than you will be able to bear very easily. Do you know I quite feel sorry for you."

"I do not deserve your pity, Mrs. Marsden, I am indebted to you for so much, and I have paid my debt by marring your plot so completely. You have done just the reverse from me. You made mine. I could never have finished my story without your aid. By the by, you did not know that *I* was the author of that romance that interested you so much—'Arcadia, versus Hades,' though you complimented me yesterday on my fine, crisp style. I felt unworthy as I told you then, for *you* provided most of the material."

A little spasm of malice crossed Thello's face, as she remarked,

"I cannot bear the purity of this atmosphere. It is positively stifling. You people are too good for me."

"I am dreadfully afraid," returned Faithorne, "that we share your opinion. Er—can I take you to your carriage?" and he opened the door.

"Take care," said Thello, as she passed through followed by him, "that I never get the chance to avenge my failure."

When they were gone, Edith turned from the window and came to where Denalguez stood, as she had left him.

"Can you forgive me," said he, "for speaking so unkindly to you just now?"

"Yes," replied Edith, "your heart is good

and true, I know. You would have saved me if you could. It is no fault of yours that you failed. I wonder," said she, looking up at him, a dazed expression in her eyes, "if there are many people like me, who come to grief for no sin save being a fool? Why could not I see last spring what I see now? Oh, for the months that can never return!"

She covered her face with her hands for a moment, and then laying one hand upon his arm, she continued softly,

"Happiness will soon be yours. You can spare a few minutes to my misery. Since I have been here alone, how I have prayed for a word to show that I was remembered. My heart choked me when you said you came from him—I thought my prayers were answered—but no. He offered me only an allowance. I want the love of which I once thought so lightly, and that now I would give my soul to regain, and he offers me instead—money. I decline the offer!" continued she, drawing herself to her full height. "When I am dead, which I trust will be soon, tell—my husband—that—since he last spoke to me in love I have learned more good than evil."

At this juncture the door opened softly, and Philip Warburton appeared. Edith, engrossed as she was, did not catch the sound that he

made in entering, and at a gesture from Denalguez he remained out of sight behind them.

"It was then that he told me I should learn who really loved me. Tell him I have learned. Tell him I have learned to know him, and have—learned to love him in return."

"You have told me yourself," cried Warburton, coming forward. "Marion, thank heaven! could not keep her promise to you. She told me of her visit to you yesterday, and that my love might conquer my pride. Ah, love," said he, coming close to her and taking her in his arms, "why did you not send for me before?"

A voice—Marion's—was heard in the passage, asking for her sister, who, disengaging herself from her husband's embrace, ran to meet her.

"You will forgive me," said the little girl, "will you not," as she threw her arms around her neck, "for telling Philip everything that I promised not to tell him?"

"Forgive you, sweetheart?" said Edith, "it is I who ask your pardon. And you," she continued, turning to Denalguez, "can you ever forgive me?"

"My reward," returned he, "is in seeing you reënter Arcadia, confident that you will

never more weary of its sweet security. But if you owe me aught, in payment give me a place in your graceful land where dwells my love."

END.





